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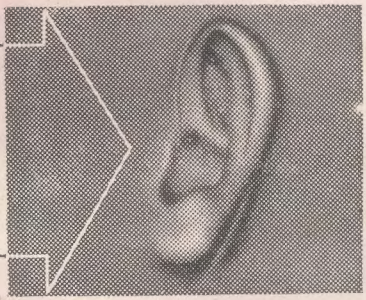

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# Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

October, 1949 Vol. 121, No. 6

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*Cover painted for Adventure by Robert Stanley*

*Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor*

Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

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# LOST TRAILS

**NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintance separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.**

I am 18 years old and have been trying for some time to locate my two uncles—without success. So I am turning to you for help. About all I know of them are their names and where they may be living. They are: Harry Aloysius Moore and Robert John Moore. They are most likely living in Chicago, Illinois or a suburb. Harry may be in the printing business. Please write to Arthur Wm. Ronnie, 4639 Maubert Ave., Los Angeles 27, Calif.

Anyone having information about my son Robert Saffell, formerly USN, last heard from in Boise, Idaho please contact Charles Saffel, Dillonvale, Ohio, Box 161.

Marie Whitaker, 519 Second Avenue South, Great Falls, Montana is seeking her two sons, Thomas Dewey Whitaker, now 50 years old, and Sidney LeRoy Whitaker, 48 years old. Last heard from them about 1919.

Henry L. Durst, 2827 N. Cambridge, Chicago, Ill., would like to hear from Joe Bennett, Lt. Comdr., U.S.N.R., whom he met on the B.B. *Wisconsin* in 1947. Last heard from him from Port Arthur, Texas. He had lived in the Bronx, N. Y.

Anyone knowing whereabouts of Corp. McQuarry of Ashland, Me., formerly Co. C, 26th I. T. Bn., Camp Croft, please write Ed Stuart, Burgess Store, Va.

I would like to hear from anyone who has seen my brother, Sergeant Elmer J. Anderson #34783328, nose gunner in 15th Air Force, missing in action somewhere near Turnitz, Austria, August 23, 1944. He would be 24. George E. Anderson, 731 Crocker St., Los Angeles 21, Calif.

S/Sgt. Otis Hudson, Jr., 9217 Oels, Ft. Worth, Texas, would like to contact Charles Brenecke, formerly midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis.

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**For Mystery**—"The Big Steal" with Robert Mitchum, Jane Greer and William Bendix (RKO).

When a $300,000 Army payroll is stolen, Lt. Duke Halliday (Robert Mitchum) and Joan Grahame (Jane Greer) start across Mexico by car in pursuit of the thief. They, in turn, are pursued by Captain Vincent Blake (William Bendix) who has accused Duke of taking the money. As the chase progresses, the tension continues to mount until the swift, surprise ending. *The plot of the picture gets jumbled, but the thrill-a-minute pace will hold you in your seat.*

• • •

**For Comedy-Romance**—"The Lady Takes A Sailor" with Jane Wyman, Dennis Morgan, Eve Arden, Robert Douglas and Allyn Joslyn (Warner Bros.).

The lady (Jane Wyman) is president of a national research institute, impeccable, honest and engaged to a stuffy Harvard lawyer (Allyn Joslyn). People begin to doubt her integrity, however, when she returns from a sailboat trip and says that she has ridden with "Davey Jones" in a strange, underwater craft which was stalled by an octopus. Trying to straighten it out by proving that real-life Bill Craig (Dennis Morgan) was the mysterious "Davey" and that his craft was a new Navy underwater tank, is an hilarious task. *This is a daffy picture that will give you a full evening of laughter.*

• • •

**For Drama**—"The Great Gatsby" with Alan Ladd, Betty Field, MacDonald Carey, Ruth Hussey, Barry Sullivan, Howard Da Silva and Shelley Winters (Paramount).

Based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic about the roaring '20s, this film tells the tragic story of Jay Gatsby (Alan Ladd), who became a bootlegger because he thought money could buy everything—even a rich man's wife. In the course of the story, Gatsby tries to crash Long Island society but finds it as false in its way of life as he is in his. In the end, awake at last to his empty daydreams, Gatsby is murdered for a crime he didn't commit. *Spottily played, this film claims its chief interest as a portrait of a wild and dizzy by-gone era.*

• • •

**For Adventure**—"Slattery's Hurricane" with Richard Widmark, Linda Darnell, Veronica Lake and John Russell (20th Century-Fox).

Ex-Navy pilot, Will Slattery (Richard Widmark), now a chauffeur pilot for an importer, meets his wartime buddy, Felix Hobson (John Russell), who is hunting hurricanes for the Navy. He discovers that his one-time sweetheart, Aggie (Linda Darnell), is now Mrs. Hobson. The importer's secretary, Dolores (Veronica Lake), who is in love with Slattery, realizes that he is still interested in Aggie and disappears. While looking for Dolores and straightening out the situation between Aggie, Hobson and himself, Slattery finds that he is unwittingly involved in a narcotics smuggling ring. He finally makes amends by taking Hobson's place on a dangerous mission to locate a particularly vicious storm. *This is an exciting look into the lives of U. S. Navy hurricane hunters.*

• • •

**For A Western**—"Calamity Jane and Sam Bass" with Yvonne De Carlo and Howard Duff (Universal-International). Technicolor.

Sam Bass (Howard Duff) had never fired a gun before he came to Denton, Texas. He learns fast, though, when the town banker has his horse poisoned prior to the big race of the year. Turned outlaw to recover money from the banker which is rightfully his, Bass takes to the hills with the assistance of Calamity Jane (Yvonne De Carlo). Sam's true love, Kathy Egan, convinces Sam that he should give himself up. When it looks like the jury for his trial will be packed against him by the banker, Sam escapes again with Calamity Jane's help. There's a showdown battle and Sam is fatally wounded. When he asks to be taken to Kathy, Calamity Jane realizes that Sam Bass was never for her. *There's enough action, color and different twists to make this a show that Western fans will want to see.*

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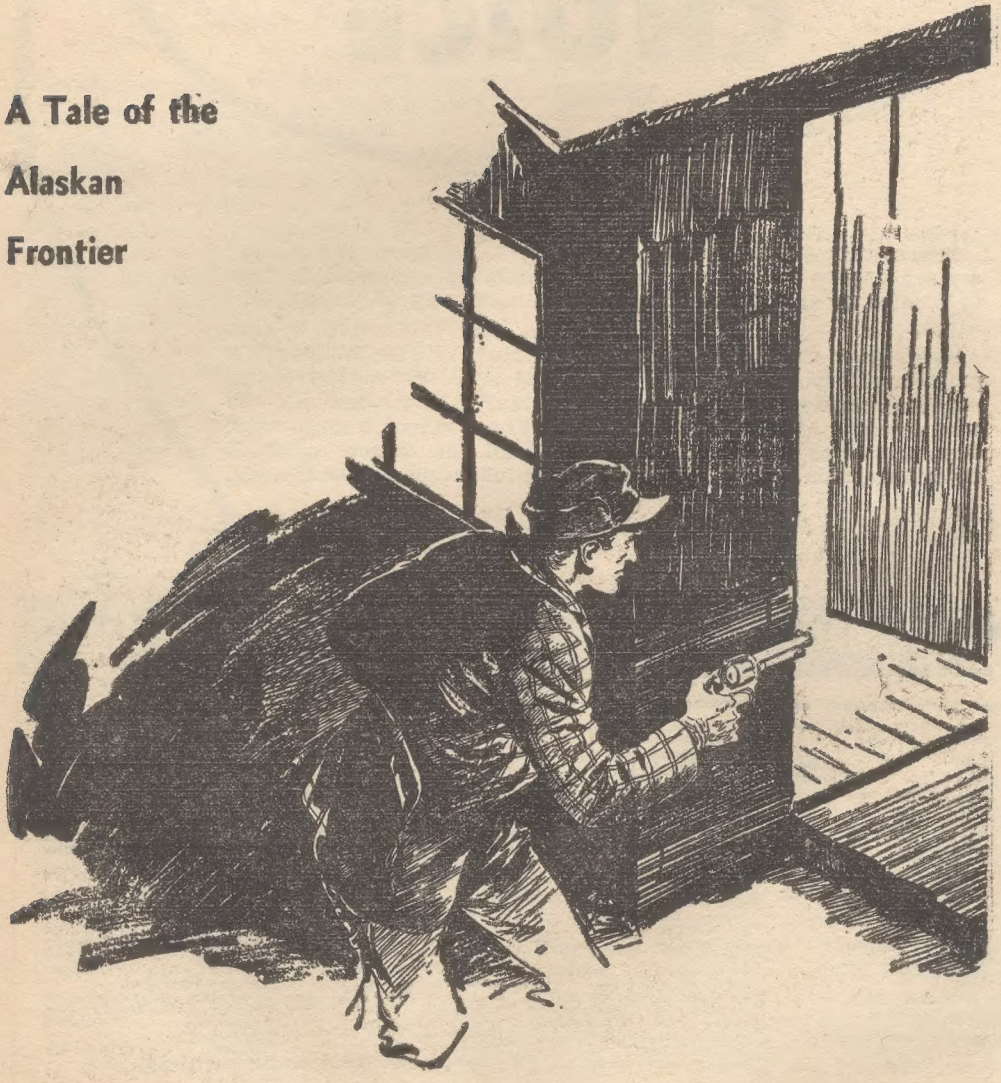
# CHILKOOT NORTH

**A Tale of the Alaskan Frontier**



*Swanson suddenly realized someone was behind him and started to turn with the rifle, but the Colt's hammer made a hard click when Kelly rocked it back, and the sound seemed to nail him to the spot.*

By DAN CUSHMAN

THE luck of Horseshoe Kelly had gone stale in San Francisco. It had made a turn for the worse when the steamer *Jacob Swain* crumpled her rusty bottom on a reef along the mist-draped Alaskan coast, and it had taken the final skids across the poker tables of gold-rush Skagway.

The sourdoughs had an expression for it. Horseshoe Kelly was down to hard-pan. And so the days of March, 1898, found him carrying his own grubstake over a mountain of snow and ice called the Chilkoot Pass.

He'd been at it twenty-one days. Those young men of the North West Mounted up at the top meant it when they said no stampeder would cross to the interior without a ton of grub.

Horseshoe Kelly stopped at "breather number two" and turned his back toward

ILLUSTRATED BY
MONROE EISENBERG

the arctic wind that licked down across the summit. It had been eight below at Sheep Camp, and that meant eighteen here and at least twenty-eight at the crest. It was a hell of a country, and by the looks of things it might get worse.

Other men kept falling out of line, standing with their backs to the wind, staring with dead looking eyes across the roof of mist that covered the lower slopes and ocean. None of them spoke. Of them all, only Kelly seemed actually to see anything below.

Kelly was about twenty-five, slim, six feet. Even in heavy woolens and parka he didn't look like a strong man, yet he carried a pack that tilted the Sheep Camp scales at 103 pounds, and did it with apparent indifference. There's something in knowing how, and something in the state of mind a man starts out with.

Kelly hadn't been pleased with the Chilkoot, but he was philosopher enough not to be surprised by it. It was just more of his losing streak.

After a couple of minutes, a short, powerful man with a face ugly as a pit bull's staggered from the steady line of toiling men to pause behind him. Kelly recognized his wheezing and spoke in a soft voice without taking his eyes from the scene below.

"Just thinking about one night in Miles City. Christmas. We rode in from Two Dot and crossed the ice of the Yellowstone. Forty-four below by the N.P. thermometer. There was a bartender named Thebis in a place called the Buffalo, and he mixed us what he called the John L. Sullivan punch. Rye whiskey, boiling water, honey, lemon peel—"

"What in the jumpin' hell . . .?"

"I was just thinking, Jug, this was our last load. Thought tomorrow I'd set you up to a John L. over in Bennett City."

"I don't need a drink tomorrow. I need it now."

Jug Macure was still wheezing. He'd been a timber jack up in the Humboldt country, and a tough one, but working as a bouncer along San Francisco's Barbary Coast hadn't helped his wind.

"This is a young man's country," he said. Icicles had formed in the hairs of his nostrils and he used the back of one mitten to break them off. "When a man gets to pushing forty-five he needs a snort every mile or three to keep his joints from freezing. Damn the Chilkoot—we should have gone by way of the White Pass."

"White Pass is as tough as the Chilkoot and it would take us a week longer. I heard you could walk on the bodies of dead horses from Porcupine all the way to the footbridge."

Jug cursed for a while. He did it in a tired voice, and at nothing in particular. "When I think we'd have the Siwash packin' this grub at a dollar a pound if that damned *chechakho* hadn't filled his inside straight on you back to Skagway!"

"Maybe we'll win it back in Bennett—if those Mounties don't line me up with the Soapy Smith bunch and boot me back down the Alaska side. They will, unless maybe my luck changes."

Jug went on cursing and Kelly said with the thoughtfulness that was habitual to him, "I'll win a pot for you one of these days, Jug, and I'll pay your wages right down to the last two bit piece. With interest."

"The hell with it. I'm not looking for any back wages."

THEY'D left San Francisco with sixty head of work stock which Kelly planned on selling at triple his investment on his arrival in Skagway, but the boat had ripped her bottom out on a reef along the Lynn Canal, and the horses hadn't had a chance there in the hold. Kelly didn't care so much for his investment. He'd dropped big bets before. But sometimes he lay in his robes at night and thought of those animals, trapped in the darkness of the hold with the icy sea rolling in. Kelly had never had too much mercy for his fellow man, but ever since he was a kid punching cows for the Squawblanket spread in Wyoming he'd loved horses.

Jug got his tumpline set, and they went on, taking the last steep pitch of the Chilkoot, a sheer climb of forty-five degrees along steps hacked in ice. It was a brutal climb, but at last the crest was there, and Horseshoe Kelly straightened to let the fatigue run from his body.

The stars were just coming out and a

gray twilight hung across mountains, timber, and rolling hills that extended in a vastness without apparent limit toward the Yukon. At his right, in the shelter of a tiny, mountain hollow was a cluster of tents with boarded sides with the Union Jack snapping atop a short, jackspruce staff. The flap of the largest tent had been tied open and a lantern hung on the ridgepole just inside. A mounted policeman wearing a long, ratskin coat stood beneath it making rapid entries on some sort of form.

At either side of the police tents a sprawling camp and supply dump had sprung up. There were a few tents, some wikiups patched out of tarp and blankets, but for the most part men had merely burrowed out rude shelters among their accumulated bales of provisions where they could flop for a couple of hours before slogging the four or five miles back to Sheep Camp for their next load. That evening a half-dozen fires were burning, but none of them was larger than a dude's hat, for there was no timber atop the Chilkoot, and even the wood of broken crates went at the rate of a dollar a pound.

"Short line," Jug said, looking at the men waiting turns at the police tent. "There were 180 of 'em lined up yesterday, and a hundred more went through by the White Pass. That French-Canuck with the dog team said there were two thousand living at Bennett City, and that many more down on Bennett Lake and Linderman whipsawing plank for barges. At this rate there'll be twelve thousand ready for the first stampede when the river breaks."

They found their camp—a heap of canvas-bound packs of flour, sugar and shortening covered by new snow. Counting the packs on their backs the heap contained two tons of provisions almost to the pound—the minimum with which two men could gain entrance at this southern gateway to the Klondike.

Jug bent over to dump his pack. Sweat had worked through the armpits of his mackinaw, and the straps had frozen tight. It took some maneuvering to pull the material free without tearing it. Then he stood back, breathing and swinging his arms to get the cramp from back and shoulders. After two minutes of that he looked around and saw Horeshoe Kelly still erect, watching the police tent.

"What the hell? You got so you like that bindle?" His eyes narrowed. "Say, you weren't serious about the Mounties maybe booting you back down the Alaska side!"

Kelly smiled. He had a good set of teeth, and they showed up well against the snowburned brown of his face.

"They might, and I don't know that I'd blame them. I'd guess they had enough faro dealers inside already."

Skagway, down on the Alaska side, had become a roaring, gunman's town with Soapy calling the dance, but the Mounted Police had ideas of its own about running things inside the Dominion, so during the past three weeks more than two hundred "undesirables" had been turned back from the ports of entry at White Pass and the Chilkoot—these in addition to the unfortunates who'd hit the stampede broke and couldn't put up the police requirement of a ton of grub.

"What'll we do if they run us out?" Jug moaned.

"*Us* out? Hell, Jug, you're in the clear, Just pretend you don't know me."

"What'll *you* do?"

"Sell out. Know what my end of the that grub's worth, sitting here at the top of the pass? Twenty-five hundred, or more'n that if I find somebody in a hurry. Twenty-five hundred is still something for a man to jingle in his poke. It'd set me up in business. Maybe I'll go back to Seattle and start a chicken farm. Maybe I'll buy a stack in one of those Skagway stud games."

Horseshoe Kelly rolled a thin, brown-paper cigarette, struck a match, cupped his hands against the arctic wind to light it. He'd been a drifter and a gambler, and he'd ended with the rep of being the smoothest faro dealer on the Barbary Coast, but before all that he'd punched cows in the Territory of Wyoming, and if a man has ever been a cowboy it shows in his legs and hips to the end of his days. Horseshoe Kelly looked like a cowboy now despite mukluks and mackinaw pants as he stood with one eye closed against the cigarette and said, "Don't go to worry about me, Jug. I'll land on my feet."

Kelly had had a lot experience landing on his feet. He'd managed it, in one manner or another, ever since the night a drunken stepfather had cut his drift rope in the wild cowtown of McKetrick, south of the Yellowstone.

Jug said, "A man would probably be better off on the American side, anyhow." He waved his hand at the camp in general. "Look at 'em. An army of flat-busted bank clerks that don't know a single-jack from a clam gun. Listen, Kelly—"

"The name is Smith. James Wilfred Smith, of Avalanche, Wyoming."

"I could think up a hell of a lot better name than Smith to fool them Mounties with."

"Smith. It has an honest sound to it. Any *undesirable* trying to crash this gate would think up a better name than Smith. If his name *was* Smith he'd change it. Smith is too obvious. If anyone gives the name 'Smith' it must be because he has a clean conscience, and because it's his own."

"Except for you."

"My name *might* be Smith. I never made sure."

THEY ate beans, solidified in heavy pork fat, sliced and laid on pieces of Swede hardtack. When they were finished, Kelly cached his six shooter in his bedroll and went down to wait in line before the police tent. Thirty-eight men were ahead of him, and it was two hours before his turn came. He'd placed himself to come before one of the new constables rather than Sergeant Ives, but Ives had been watching him and stepped over, looking suspicious and hard-faced, to glance at the form that was being filled out.

"Smith," Ives said, his eyes on the name Kelly had signed. "Any relation to your good citizen Soapy?"

It was meant as a joke, but there was a disquieting note in his voice when he said it. For half an hour, ever since Ives first looked at him, he'd had a hunch that his reputation had once again preceded him.

"No relation," Kelly said.

Ives had been on shift all day, and the long, cold grind had made him ill-tempered. Kelly knew by the tightness of his mouth that he was on the point of refusing him entrance just on general principles.

"Long climb," Kelly grinned. "I don't feel like walking back. I'm not in with the Soapy Smith crowd, Sergeant."

"You're a miner, then?"

"No. I'm not much of anything, otherwise I don't suppose I'd ever have joined this stampede."

Ives was expecting him to lie and say he was a miner, and in that event he'd simply send him back down the Alaskan side. The apparent honesty of Kelly's answer made him change his mind.

"Wait a moment," he said, and went inside the tent.

His shadow was visible, moving against the slanting, canvas top, and Kelly guessed he was going through his rogue's gallery of pictures. In a couple of minutes he came back outside. Kelly knew by his expression that it was all up with him.

"I remember you now," Ives said. "I saw you dealing faro down at the Bucket of Blood in Skagway. Sorry, Smith, but the Klondike will be well supplied with faro dealers without you."

"That's final?"

Ives shrugged and said with dreary rote the words he'd evidently spoken many times before, "You have the privilege of appeal to Division Headquarters in White Horse."

"In person?"

Ives didn't laugh. "I'll furnish you with a form. It will go out on the next post. Sorry. That's the best I can do."

He didn't offer to actually get the form, and Kelly didn't wait for it. He turned to look for Jug who was carrying supplies down to the scales.

"Oh, Smith!" a man said.

It took Kelly a second to realize he was the one being spoken to. He looked and saw a large, broad-shouldered man in a black fur cap and overcoat walking towards him. The man's face and voice were both distantly familiar, but at the moment he couldn't place him.

"Smith, you're late!" the man was saying. "I've been expecting you in Bennett for the last ten days. I was within ten minutes of heading down to Skagway to look for you."

Kelly's face had been long trained never to show surprise at anything. After

*"Sorry, Smith," Ives said, "but the Klondike will be well supplied with faro dealers without you."*

the first moment, the unexpected turn seemed to amuse him. He said, "And I dare say I'd have met you in Skagway. The sergeant was just seeing to that."

The big man stripped off a mitten to shake hands. He'd done hard work at some time in his life, as the breadth and power of his hand showed. Lanternlight from the tent slanted across his face. It was a rugged face, handsome in a way. He was thirty-five or forty. A cigar was clamped hard between his teeth, and it was that, together with the square jut of his jaw that pegged him in Kelly's memory.

He was Rex Blackmore, once the owner of the Bird of Paradise, one of the more flashy variety houses down on the Barbary Coast.

"Why in hell didn't you write when you got to Skagway like you promised, Smith?"

Blackmore was carrying it off well, and Kelly knew by the sudden change in Ives' attitude he was of more than ordinary consequence in the great stampede.

Horseshoe Kelly occupied himself with rolling another of his brown-paper cigarettes. He licked it to shape and said in a voice that was still amused, "Now it was unthoughtful of me I'll admit, but I had a run-in with little casino in a place called the Bucket of Blood and I was down to the point where I had to deal faro for a grubstake. Afterward I had to pack it over. It took a few days."

Blackmore cursed. Suddenly the humor of it seemed to strike him, and he tilted his head in a great, booming laugh. He did it all without taking his cigar from between his strong teeth. The cigar must have been there, unlighted, for quite a while, for its wet stump had frozen hard about half an inch from his lips.

After his laugh, Blackmore wiped the corners of his eyes on the back of a mitten and said, "What do you make of a man like this, Sergeant? Here he is, the best accountant in San Francisco, and he can't recognize the mathematical impossibility of beating a Skagway rakeoff."

"He's your employee, then?" Ives asked. "You should have said so, Smith." Then to Blackmore: "I was just sending him back."

"Oh, damn! He's all right. My personal guarantee!"

Ives nodded. He was already stamping a new entrance permit. "We have to be careful. Orders."

"Of course." Blackmore had drawn a handful of cigars from his greatcoat pocket and was pressing them in Ives' hand. "Of course, Sergeant. I understand your position. Perfectly . . ."

## CHAPTER II

### TEN PER CENT FOR KELLY

KELLY and Blackmore walked off together, and for a few seconds there were no words between them. It was colder now as the late-winter night settled, and the packed snow of the path creaked under Blackmore's two hundred pounds of weight. Downhill a string of malemutes were barking as they got strung out under a sledload of supplies on the downhill drag toward Bennett.

"Thanks," Kelly said. "You saved me getting shagged back to Skagway."

"We old Barbary Coasters have to stick together."

The words sounded good, but he wondered about Blackmore. He'd never had a reputation for going out of his way to do men favors that didn't reflect at least a little benefit to himself. Not that he was any worse than most of the operators along the Coast.

"How'd you know my new name was Smith?"

"I saw Jug over by the scales. And that was a hell of a name. That Mountie thought you were Soapy's brother."

"You seem to stand better with the police here than you did in Frisco."

Blackmore bit savagely into the cigar and turned on him. "Damn it, I should! Do you know how much I have sunk into that stretch of ice, rock and tundra between Dyea and the edge of Bennett Lake? Eighty thousand dollars, and no end to it yet."

"Grocery business?" Kelly asked softly.

"Champagne!"

Kelly looked at him with narrowed eyes. "Champagne! For this ragtail army? These flat-broke drifters driven out by McKinley's prosperity? Why, most of these scissorbill *chechakhos* were lucky to raise enough dough for a ton of black-eyed beans. Besides, if it gets any colder your champagne will freeze solid and break the bottles."

"I've had some fifteen per cent Cobart break the bottles, but that twenty-year Mumm's just turns to slush like thin oatmeal. I don't know what it'll do to the carbonation, and I don't give a damn. Nobody up there at Dawson is going to order champagne because he's a connoisseur. It'll be because he's struck it rich and wants some dance hall girl to hear the cork go bang."

"At twenty dollars a quart."

"At fifty, or whatever I can get. Sure, they're a ragtail army now, but wait until August. The Klondike is big, Kelly. It's big as Butte, or the Mother Lode, and it'll end by being bigger than the two rolled together. It's more than just the Klondike. Dawson will be the center of a mining empire. The bedrock is plated with color from Fortymile all the way to Keno Hill. They'll take out twenty million this summer. It'll be a hundred million at clean-up next spring when they get the steam thawers to work. They won't be a draggletailed army then, Kelly. They'll be rich as Guggenheims, and they'll be spending their dough like sheepherders."

"And you'll be there to take it."

"I'll be there. You remember the old Bird of Paradise, Kelly? Well, that's

what I'm taking through. The Bird of Paradise, just the way she stood on The Coast. Cut glass, French mirrors, mahogany—the works. Uphill from Dyea, the Chilkoot, Bennett City. A hundred and a hundred twenty-five pounds to the grab. I had to cut it up in chunks. Maybe you don't think that was a job, cracking those French mirrors up in squares. And those teakwood pillars along the backbar—remember them, Kelly? Well, they're here tonight. And some of them on that freight sled that just pulled out for Bennett. I'll fit it together in Dawson, and there she'll be, the Bird of Paradise, the first deluxe house on the Klondike. The *first,* and do you know what it's costing me to be first?"

"You said something about eighty thousand dollars."

"That's what I've spent between Bennet and tidewater—on transportation at about one-twenty a pound. I'll have 150 thousand tied up when I unload at the mouth of the Klondike."

"Why didn't you ship up the Yukon from St. Michaels?"

"I am. But this goes through first. I'll be first with a deluxe house on the Klondike, and I'll keep it first. You've been around, Kelly. You know what the top reputation's worth in any boom town. In Dawson it'll be worth two hundred thousand a year. The Bird of Paradise—that's the first place I want one of those sourdough Guggenheims to think of when he has a fortune to toss."

"Any competition?" Horseshoe Kelly asked in his easy-humored voice.

"You heard?"

"I noticed thirty-five Siwash packers going up the Skagway River with a cargo of fancy stuff for Jason Best."

"The hell with Best. He'll have a saloon and drag-out compared with the Paradise. I was thinking of Diamond Jack McGowan."

THERE were a few men on the stampede who hadn't heard of Diamond Jack McGowan. Eight years before, Diamond Jack had established a reputation as a big time gambler by laying one hundred thousand dollars on a single spin of the wheel at Bob Miller's Territorial House in Butte. He'd placed his bet on the red, and when the little, ivory ball dropped to rest, it was riding snugly in the yellow. Diamond Jack had been playing on the cuff and it took him four days to raise the money. He raised it, though, right down to the last two bit piece, and after tossing it to the banker, he strode on, up the gilded rear stairs of the Territorial, opened the door to Bob Miller's office, and put a .44 derringer ball through his heart.

The Butte police arrested him, but the prosecutor found himself unable to locate twelve men who didn't also believe Miller's wheel was crooked, and so Diamond Jack walked out a free man just as everyone had assumed that he would.

That fortune was only one of several that Diamond Jack won and lost while establishing himself as one of the West's great plungers. Recently he'd operated the Belmont House in Butte, but he'd sold out and hit the Yukon trail in a venture that was proving to be the greatest plunge of his career.

"How's he making it?" Kelly asked.

"He lost five hundred cases of liquor in that Skagway warehouse fire, but outside of that he'll get his stuff through all right. He's using the White Pass. Tried to make it in ton lots with horses and sleds, but he lost more than a hundred head of stock in that tundra below the canyon, so he gave it up and cut his loads to pack and dog-sled size. With horses selling at five hundred a head, you figure it out. He'll have two dollars sunk to my one by the time he reaches Bennett, but he'll get there."

"And from Bennett?"

"He's gambling on a couple of big woodpiles. Rafts. He won't be able to shoot the White Horse Rapids in them, so he must be figuring on hiring those Canuck bateaux when he gets there. Maybe he figures on bateaux all the way to the Yukon, and the Transportation company's steamboat from there. Anyway, he'll be sitting there in Bennett, waiting for the ice to clear off the lake, but not me. There's a steam-tug frozen in the ice at Bennett—belongs to the Yukon Transportation Company, and I've already leased it as far as White Horse. It'll tow my barges through the soft-ice and leave Jack sitting there. I'll shoot the White

Horse Rapids, and the Thirty-Mile will take me as far as Lake Lebarge. That's the big barrier—Lebarge, and that's where I'll beat him.

"The rivers in this country are open early. The Yukon is almost clear by the tenth of May, and the Thirty-Mile even earlier. But the ice is still solid on Lebarge and might hold to the first week in June, while the rush upriver from St. Michaels won't get moving before the first of July because of floe ice in the Bering Sea.

"But Lebarge won't stop me. I'll take it north-east by the sled trail to Hootlinqua. That's on the Teslin, the main branch of the Yukon. Flat country and easy trail. I've been buying my own malemutes and sleds, and as soon as this job is finished I'll send them overland."

"What if there's no snow for your runners between Lebarge and Hootlinqua?"

"Then I'll take it down lake ice. I'll beat him, Kelly. He'll have an ace in his sleeve. He'll fight me, but I'll beat him. And not by an hour or a day. I'll be in Dawson City two weeks ahead of him."

They walked downhill to Blackmore's camp. There was a large tent, its canvas translucent-yellow from the light inside. Fire was burning in a tiny, seal oil stove, and its heat felt strange and rather suffocating to Kelly after his days and nights in the open. Lid of the stove had been left off to furnish light. A narrow-faced, extremely dark man of thirty or thereabouts went ahead checking off cargo with a stub pencil without glancing up. He was a quarterbreed, but one of the plains tribes rather than Siwash.

Blackmore introduced him as the Piegan Kid and then asked, "How'd you come out with old Quat-at-chigut?"

The breed spoke without stopping his pencil, "I told Quack-guts I'd put a slug of Sam Colt's lead in his belly next time one of his Siwashes broke into a pack on the trail."

"No rough stuff. Not with those Mounties sitting there. If you have any more trouble with him, pay him off and fire him."

The Piegan Kid didn't say anything, but the twist of his lips showed his contempt for the Mounties.

Kelly warmed his hands at the seal-oil stove. His back was partly turned and he could feel the breed's eyes on him. But when he turned, his gaze had once again shifted to the notebook.

The Piegan Kid checked over three or four more bundles and then he turned and spoke to Blackmore: "I need five hundred."

"Damn it, I've already advanced you—" Then Blackmore stopped and decided to laugh. He dug inside his big, black fur coat and drew out some American banknotes. "Here's two hundred. That'll have to do you. And stay away from those Bennett faro games."

THE Piegan Kid took the money in his long, dark fingers and wadded it inside his parka. As he opened the fold, Kelly briefly saw the blued steel of a revolver. He carried it there protected from freezing by the warmth of his body. Things like that happen even to a Colt in the strong cold.

"We're heading down to Bennett," Blackmore said.

*"Tee-sin gatchay, nah-go!"* The Kid shouted in the Tlingit jargon, and in a few seconds there were sounds of mukluks in the snow and a Siwash dog driver peered inside the tent flap.

"Now go," he grunted. "Tee-sin plenty, damn yes. Plenty more you got *hi-you hoochinoo.*"

"You'll get no *hoochinoo* here," Blackmore grunted, buttoning the big, braid loops of his coat. They went outside, and Blackmore went on. "These Siwash are worse on liquor than the Injuns back in the States." He stood, thinking, and by the way his eyes had narrowed and shifted toward the tent Kelly knew he was thinking about the Piegan Kid. "Damn an Injun, and damn a breed. You know how much he's into me for? The Piegan Kid? Six thousand, and that doesn't include the nine hundred it cost me to clear him of that murder charge back in Seattle."

"Bookkeeper?"

"He's good with figures. Learned it in the Indian school down at Fort Shaw. I could get a dozen men to do that checking, but old Quack-guts and his Siwash are afraid of him and they aren't quite as

handy at busting open the liquor as they would be otherwise. He knows the country, so I guess he's worth the six thousand—for a while. He was six years at Fortymile, and he prospected around Klondike before the big strike. I'd have a hell of a time beating Diamond Jack without him, and he knows it. But once we hit Hootlinqua he'd better keep his Injun down or I'll drown him."

Blackmore laughed, but Kelly knew he never more than half joked about anything.

The Siwash came around with a passenger sled and a string of malemutes that were rested and snapping at one another. Jug Macure came up then to ask what Kelly wanted him to do with their supplies.

"You ride down with it on the next freight sled," Blackmore said.

They rode off with Jug standing in light from the tent flap watching them.

"Jug doesn't trust me, does he?" Blackmore asked when they rode away in the passenger sled. "*You* trust me, don't you, Kelly?"

"The only thing I trust is that fixed percentage in favor of the dealer."

Kelly had been a long time without sleep, and the alternate rocking and jerking movement of the sled worked like opiate to glaze over his mind. Blackmore kept talking, about his outfit, about the thieving Siwash.

"You can't shoot an Injun here, Kelly. Those redcoats are tough. They'd pick you up for knocking over an Injun quicker than they would for a white man."

"I don't want to kill any Indians."

"You would if you dealt with Quackguts for a while."

Kelly got his hands free of his mittens and rolled a cigarette. They were traveling a sled trail that was hard and slick as glass, downhill by six or seven degrees—just enough to keep the wheel team pushing hard to keep from being nicked by the runners.

"What the hell do you want of me, Blackie?" he asked.

"I hate to see an old Barbary Coaster on his uppers."

"And what's your other reason?"

"You never give a man the benefit of the doubt, do you? All right, if you back a place like the Bird of Paradise you have to go up against the big stakes. When I hit Dawson and one of those gold-loaded sheepherders tosses a hundred thousand against my bank I'd like to have the best faro dealer in the business pulling cards."

"I deal a straight box."

"Sure. And I run a straight place. All I ever wanted was my half on the splits. But I'd still like to have Horseshoe Kelly behind that little box."

Kelly waited, knowing there was something else. His cigarette had been away from his lips for a quarter-minute, but the wet stub had already frozen. Blackmore was speaking: "I was never damn fool enough to expect something for nothing. I'm willing to cut you in. Ten per cent, Kelly. On everything. Know what that could mean to you? Maybe fifty thousand the first year."

"And just to deal faro!" Kelly said in his soft, amused voice.

"I need you, Kelly. I need somebody I can trust. I need somebody that Diamond Jack McGowan won't buy out, like he probably will that Piegan halfbreed if he comes along with a bigger wad of money than I do. I need somebody to help fight him—Diamond Jack and that girl of his. His daughter—ever see her?"

"No."

"She's the one! When the pressure gets tough, Diamond Jack will hit the bottle and bet chips on the other man's game. But that girl is tough right down the line. You're a good deal like her, Kelly. Behind that silky style of yours, you're hard as broken quartz. You don't know it, but I was watching you handle your gun one day at O'Grady's gallery. Only two men I ever saw as fast as you with a gun. One was Watson, that Barbary Coast ranger that got killed at the High Lead, and the other was a lad by the name of Wyatt Earp I knew when I was a kid over around Tombstone."

"No hired gun, Blackmore."

"No, but I'd like to have you on my side. By the way, there's one other man I'd put beside you, and Earp, and Watson, though I've never seen him shoot, and that's Diamond Jack McGowan. I guess you've heard about the reputation he's carved out for himself."

"I've heard something."

"Diamond Jack was hitting the bottle down in Skagway two weeks ago, and he swore he'd kill me before letting me reach Dawson ahead of him."

"Drunk."

"They have a saying down in Chinatown about the thing that's in the back of the sober man's mind being on the tip of the drunk man's tongue. Diamond Jack meant it." Kelly's back was toward him and it was hard to get enough force in his words, so Blackmore grabbed him hard by the shoulder and jerked him around so the rawhide hamper creaked and the sled swerved and threatened to capsize. "Get this! I'm not a damned bit afraid of him. I'll shoot it out with him any day he chooses. It wouldn't hurt my feelings to have him laid out stiff in this thirty below. But that won't be the way Jack will want it. Not toe to toe. You know how he got Bob Miller back at the Territorial House? Walked up with his hand shoved out, and Bob thought he wanted to shake till he saw the derringer muzzle. And I'm not going to take the long sleep. I'll die with my boots off, in a nice, warm climate. I'm going to win. *We're* going to win—if you're in it with me." He took a deep breath. "Are you?"

"I'm in," said Kelly. "For ten per cent. Ten per cent of the *first* deluxe house on the Klondike!"

## CHAPTER III

### HERE'S TO ME—TO HELL WITH THE REST!

THEY passed the camp of Linderman, goal of most stampeders who took the Chilkoot instead of the White Pass, and reached Bennett after dawn. It was a town of tents and log shanties sprawled along miles of lake shore. Actually, there were no real limits to it, it simply went on, spreading farther with each latecomer who set up a camp and commenced whipsawing timber for the boat that would take him downriver to the Klondike. Smoke from a couple or three thousand such camps hung in the air, and, through it the sun was a lifeless disc with no heat in it.

"Welcome home," Blackmore said when the sled came to a stop before a large tent with crib log sides. He got out and shook the cramp from his legs while waiting for Kelly to follow him. "Take a look at it, Kelly. Just a small sample of what you'll find in Dawson. Four thousand here, police count, and it's anybody's guess how many more there are at Long Lake and Linderman. You said they were broke! Broke, hell! Walk up to the Silver Palace tonight and you'll see twenty thousand on the green cloth."

The Silver Palace was a huge, flimsy building of sawed lumber, only half completed, the floor of the second story serving as a roof for the first. A banner stretched across the path on jackspruce poles said, *Sleeveless George and his Delmonico Girls. 12—Blushing Damsels—12.* There were other places up the wandering street. One was a large circular tent bearing a sign, *The Roundhouse.* Others of assorted log, plank and canvas bore names like *The Gold Road, The Totem Pole,* and *Siwash Annie's.*

"You should set up in business here," Kelly said.

"I'm backing the Totem Pole, but it's just chicken feed."

Blackmore was still trying to limp the stiffness from his legs, and in the black fur coat he resembled a massive black bear aroused from his winter sleep. There was a wooden door leading inside the tent. He dragged it open on frost-constricted hinges and let Kelly in ahead of him.

It was dim inside. Canvas-wrapped boxes were stacked to the canvas roof with a passageway wide enough for one man left between them. Roughly in the middle of the tent was a cleared space a dozen feet across with a sheet metal stove white-hot from its charge of pitch-pine knots. A Siwash squaw sat crosslegged on the earth in front of it. It was oppressively hot right there, but she hunched close, wrapped in blankets and buckskin, apparently oblivious to it.

There was a cook's galley at one side, and on the other some bunks of spruce boughs and blankets had been built here and there among the case goods.

"Never thought you'd be sleeping on champagne today when you left Sheep Camp with those beans on your back," Blackmore grinned.

"Mumm's? It looks like my losing streak might be ended."

Blackmore tore open a case. "This is Clicquot '72." With a swift, practiced movement he swung the bottle, cracking off its neck on the stove edge. It broke cleanly with silvery froth of liquid overflowing to cling across the black fur of his coat sleeve. He poured drinks in a couple of crockery cups from the galley and handed the remainder to the squaw.

"A toast," he said, meeting Kelly's gaze. "To us."

"To us?" Kelly repeated the words in a soft voice. He was often like this, with his eyes distant as though his mind were turned inward on thoughts he could never share with anyone. "To *me,* and to hell with the rest. Why, Blackie—that was a toast I drank to myself one night a long time ago, down in McKetrick, Wyoming. I'll tell you about it sometime."

IT WAS snowing outside when Horseshoe Kelly woke up. The sky had clouded over until it resembled tarnished lead. The air was still sharply cold, but at infrequent intervals a current of south wind whipped eddies in the snow, and it brought a feel of dampness with it.

"Chinook," he said.

Blackmore had seen him come from the tent and had walked up from the lake. "Kelly, you sound like a sourdough already."

"It would mean chinook in Montana, and it gets sixty below there, too."

"And it'll be chinook wind here, too, if the Siwash know what they're talking about. We'll have to hurry. I still have fifteen tons scattered between here and Sheep Camp. It would be hell trying to move it once the bottom goes out of the tundra."

In the days that followed, Kelly was almost continually on the move with night finding him anywhere between Skagway and the saw-camps east of Bennett where Jug Macure had taken over and was directing the barge-building crews. Blackmore left for Sitka to make final agreement for the steam tug and was gone for sixteen days. He came back when a second chinook wind was shrinking the last of the winter drifts and turning the hard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pathways of Bennett City to a trodden mixture of slush and mud.

A madness had seized Bennett. Days were growing long, with scarcely three hours of real darkness, and no one seemed to sleep. Travelers from the interior arrived with word that the river was already open below Lake Marsh, through the White Horse, and all the way to Lebarge, but the ice of Bennett Lake still held. Then one day, with a heavy groan, the great mass bulged in the middle and in a matter of hours crushed itself leaving a long strip of open water. Immediately a report raced along the lake that the open water extended all the way to Tagish, and that night eight men tried to drag a barge across rotten shore ice, and all but one of them were drowned in thirty feet of frigid water. The incident caused scarcely a ripple of excitement in the stampede fever of Bennett.

Kelly came down from the summit looking lean and tired with word that the final load of supplies was being sledded down.

He sat inside the tent and wrung water from his wool sox. Blackmore had been sleeping off the effects of his Sitka trip, the last leg of which had been by oomiyak, and he still looked heavy-eyed and ill-tempered. "Trail wet?"

Kelly nodded. The water looked grayish as it boiled through his slim fingers. The wool had a musty smell. A man gets used to a clean, orderly job like dealing faro and he forgets the things you have to go up against out on the trail.

"The ground's still frozen," he said. "We have a week to spare."

"We haven't a damned minute to spare."

There was something in Blackmore's voice that caused Kelly to look at him.

Blackmore added, "Swanson came over this morning."

Swanson was captain of the Yukon Transportation Company's steam tug that they planned on hauling them to Tagish or beyond.

"What about him?"

Blackmore got a cigar between his strong teeth, and that seemed to make him feel like himself again. His face looked bigger jawed and more savage than usual.

"What in the hell's the matter with you?" Kelly asked in a weary voice.

"I didn't tell you how he came over. He came over White Pass in Diamond Jack's sled." Blackmore then commmenced to curse. He did it slowly with a careful selection of expletives, going through each vicious term he'd picked up along twenty years of the frontier. It seemed to relieve him. He looked at Kelly and they both laughed. Sometimes two men instinctively understand each other, and Kelly and Blackmore seemed to be that way.

"So Diamond Jack got to him."

"He got to him."

"How about the agreement you made with the Sitka office? Isn't it in writing?"

"You ever see a Swede that could read when he didn't want to? And Sitka's a whole hell of a long way off."

"Pay them anything?"

"Sitka? Five hundred. That was to break us out to Tagish first."

"How much did it cost Diamond Jack to buy off Swanson?"

"I don't know. Maybe a thousand. Maybe five thousand. Maybe a couple rolls of snoose."

"Why don't you try a couple thousand on him? Hell, what's a couple thousand compared with what you have tied up already?"

"Nothing for *you!*" Blackmore barked.

He had a brittle temper, and for a moment Kelly felt the sting of it. He'd just twisted up a cigarette, and now he paused with a match in his fingers, his eyes narrow, watching Blackmore.

"Forget it," Blackmore said. "Damn it all, I've been two days without sleep."

"But maybe it was lying around in the back of your mind. I always pay my debts, Blackie—"

"I said to forget about it."

"No, I'll stick with it. What *is* two or three thousand compared with what you've dumped already if it means getting the jump through White Horse?"

"I'll not let any big-footed Swede get me to bidding against Diamond Jack. Nobody ever doublecrosses me, Kelly. I've paid for that tug to White Horse. I've paid to be broken out of here *first.*"

"Then we'll go first."

Kelly got on some dry clothes and went outside. It was dark, but the nightly frost

hadn't set in and the ground was still slushy underfoot. Open water sent up little, choppy reflections of moonlight from the middle of Bennett Lake. Closer to shore there was ice, some in broken chunks, here and there a stretch of several acres apparently as solid as ever. Bonfires blazed along shore, miles of them, up the valley toward Linderman, and to the east and north along Bennett as far as the eyes could see.

Blackmore stopped with an expression of heavy truculence on his face as he looked across at the steam tug riding amid float ice at the end of the Transportation Company's dock. Swanson and his half-breed engineman had been working it over, and now there was a column of black pitch smoke rising from its chimney. About half a mile further on, men were boarding and leaving Diamond Jack's raft, apparently taking cargo aboard.

"We'd better break those barges in along shore," Kelly said. "We can load them tomorrow." And he added, smiling softly, "And leave for Dawson City tomorrow night."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE YUKON TRAIL

THE barges were long, double-ended boats of whipsawed plank. Each of them was intended to carry about five tons, but only five were completed instead of the seven Blackmore had planned on, so it was necessary to load them substantially beyond the line of safety. The risk would not be great that side of White Horse Rapids, however, and there it would be possible to lighten cargo with the aid of the professional bateau men.

Two of the barges had been dragged over the ice during winter; it was a night's work with poles and small, half-stick charges of dynamite to break way for the others along a mile of southern shore. It was getting toward the end of long, spring twilight next day when the last load of bar fixtures and liquor had been placed, canvased over, and roped down.

The night freeze was setting it. A thin crust of ice had formed over muck and it crushed with a brittle sound when a man walked. Blackmore, after a final inspection, was slipping a mackinaw over his sweat-dampened flannel shirt. He looked up when Kelly walked over beside him. No words were spoken. They walked off together, hunting their way through camps and freight that cluttered the shore, and paused by the Yukon Transportation Company's wharf shanty. A fence of woven "dog wire" had been built around it as proof against poachers, and the gate had been chained and padlocked.

Blackmore rattled the gate and called Swanson's name. After a wait of fifteen or twenty seconds a massive-shouldered man of about fifty appeared in the door with candlelight behind him. He had a lever action .44 Winchester across one arm, not pointed, but ready.

"Yah?" he asked.

"Open up. I want to talk to you."

"Bane talk plenty gude through wire gate, by golly. An't openin' oop. Skol have order not to let any *chechakho* inside before boat ready for first trip."

"You're ready for the first trip right now, and it's going to be me. If you think I went all the way to Sitka for—"

"An't heard nothin' about you from Sitka office. An't doin' nothin' till ay get letter, by golly."

"Open up!" Blackmore drove his shoulder and the gate buckled inward with a screech of wood and wire, but the chain still held it. Swanson backed away with the rifle up to his shoulder.

"Stop, damn it, Ay skol shoot."

Blackmore reared back ready to drive his shoulder again, but the gun stopped him. He breathed deeply a couple of times, getting his temper under control. Men were working within a short stone's throw in both directions along the shore, but such was the fever of the stampede no one bothered to glance that way.

Kelly had moved to one side. He walked around the enclosure with long, casual strides and stopped where the woven wire fence ran down into the lake. It was open water there with a slush of ice joggling the shore. He'd have been armpit deep in the frigid water trying to wade it. He looked around and saw a double-ended skiff rocking gently at the end of a mooring rope. He ran over and pulled it in,

noticing then that there was a man crouched in its bottom filling seams with cotton wick.

He stepped in and said, "Take me around to the steamboat dock."

"Damn it all—"

"I said take me to the steamboat dock."

Kelly was on one knee, hands on his thighs with the tip of his holster just visible below the bottom of his mackinaw.

"All right. Don't get rough."

The man fitted a pair of homemade oars, dipped them, and the skiff slid away, bumping its way through float-ice. It only took ten or fifteen seconds to reach the dock. Kelly stepped out, motioned the man to go back. The steam tug was close, and he could hear someone in the hold working with a wrench on metal. In the other direction, hidden by the wharf shanty, Blackmore and Swanson were still having it out.

He circled the shanty. Swanson had his back turned and was unaware of his approach. Kelly stopped and lifted his Colt from the holster. A smile touched Blackmore's lips as he watched from across Swanson's shoulder. Swanson suddenly realized someone was behind him and started to turn with the rifle, but the Colt's hammer made a hard click when Kelly rocked it back, and the sound seemed to nail him to the spot.

Kelly spoke softly, "Just put the gun down. Right there by the door."

Swanson's hands were suddenly nervous. The rifle almost jumped away. "Yah. Ay don't want trooble. Ay—"

"That's what I thought. And so there won't be any trouble. We have an agreement with your head office, and you're going to go through with it, nice and peaceful."

"Yah sure."

"Open the padlock."

The Swede made a dozen jabs with a key before he got it unsnapped. Blackmore stepped in and relocked the gate behind him.

By that time Swanson had got some of his nerve back.

"Ay can't go noo. Damn float-ice crush boat like peanut. You listen har—Ay didn't know about Sitka contract but skol honor it tomorrow. Skol—"

"Tonight!" Kelly said.

Swanson stood for a few seconds looking into his eyes.

"Yah. Tonight."

The halfbreed engineman was in the hold, driving flax fiber into the packing box. His flat countenance showed no surprise at the turn in events. There were a few pounds of steam in the boiler, and it took an hour of stoking to get the head required to start. There was no unusual excitement on shore, not even when the boat cast off and commenced bumping its way through float-ice. Blackmore's barges were already roped one to the other so all the tug needed do was make fast and start forward. They were swinging away from shore when a cry went up, and then it was excitement rather than alarm. The first barges were breaking their way from Bennett toward the Yukon!

Word raced along shore and in half a minute hundreds of shadows could be seen against bonfires, running that way. A man with a great, raw voice was shouting, "There she goes! The Blackmore outfit gittin' to Tagish!"

A rifle exploded sending a streak of flame across ice and water, its bullet raising a hard clang as it struck the tug's icebreaker nose. It had come at long range from Diamond Jack's raft.

Blackmore instinctively grabbed Swanson's rifle and tossed it to his shoulder, but Kelly swung him off balance.

"Not in Bennett. Not with that Mountie camp up there!"

Blackmore lowered the gun and moved back to the protection of the hatch.

"No. Not with the Mounties there. But I'll have to shoot it out with him someplace. Here, or White Horse, or Dawson."

THE tug ground its way slowly to open water in mid-lake. From there it was easy going for a half-dozen miles where a barrier of ice stopped them. Dawn was on its way, and Swanson waited for it before picking and bucking a way through the ice floe. It took a day of ramming and blasting to reach Marsh Lake where a wind-blown channel led them almost to the camp of Tagish. The river commenced there. It was open, though dangerous from the amount of float ice it carried.

Twilight had settled again when they reached White Horse.

White Horse, like Bennett, was a town of tents and shanties. In '96 only a roadhouse had stood there. With the first rush from the coastal towns before the freeze in '97 a town of four hundred had sprung into being. It doubled before Christmas, and doubled again and again as stampeders brought their outfits down along the river ice during the days of winter, and now it had reached the stage of flaunting its civic pride by means of a banner stretched across the muddy main street—

*WHITE HORSE—GATEWAY CITY OF THE NORTH*

Boats and barges were drawn up in solid masses along the shore for more than a mile above Miles Canyon.

"Ain't been a bateau through in two days," a disgruntled stampeder told them. "Too much float ice and you can't get them Canuck pilots to budge." He stood up and shot a stream of tobacco juice to show his contempt for Blackmore's barges. "Them yours? You wouldn't be able to find a pilot to take 'em through for any kind of money. Not loaded. The crags would bat 'em to splinters before mid-canyon. You'll have to run 'em though empty and shift your freight to bateaux. Maybe next July your turn'll come up. There's upwards of eight hundred ahead of you. That is, unless you want to run 'em through yourself."

Blackmore showed strong teeth around his cigar as he laughed. "We'll be in lower White Horse by noon tomorrow."

Night was settling when they walked up the pathways of churned muck that White Horse called Main Street. On each side was a solid line of saloons and gambling houses, most of them rude structures with log walls and canvas roofs. Rough, muddy men crowded the path. A fiddle and guitar were going it inside one of the tents, and from a place of log and canvas called the Silver Palace come the unmistakable sounds of a ragtime piano.

"I'd like to know how in hell they got a thing like that here," Kelly said.

They went inside. For half a minute, a solid press of men kept them near the front of the long room. The place was candlelit and it might have been bright enough had it not been for the layers of tobacco smoke that seemed unwilling to drift through the awning ventilators in the tent roof above. A rough plank bar stood at one side. There was a combined

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gambling room and dance hall beyond. Dimly, by brownish candle light, they could see a sharp-faced man, dressed in a vaudeville check suit and straw hat banging a small upright piano. Four weary-looking girls were collecting percentage checks for drinks, but the room was too full of men and gambling equipment to allow dancing.

"Kelly!" It was a woman's voice. "Knock me down, it's Horseshoe Kelly!"

It took him a moment to make her out at the far end of the room. She was blonde, and strikingly beautiful, perhaps thirty. She was seated on a high stool behind the faro spread. She'd paused with her jeweled fingers hovering over the box and was smiling at him. The woman was Silver Annie, once of Leadville and late of the Barbary Coast.

She nodded to Blackmore, too, and said when they approached, "I've seen everybody from the Coast now. Highpockets, Jimmy Swain, The Deadwood Kid, Jib the Turk. Even Elephant Maggie. She was through here with twelve girls to start the first yard north of fifty-three. Come up here, Kelly, and finish this case for me. I need a cigarette."

Kelly moved through the press of men and climbed to the low platform beside her. He rubbed his fingers, blew on them, and looked down for a while on the green cloth with its enameled suit of spades like one reacquainting himself with some long-forgotten scene. Annie was lighting up a tailor-made cigarette and talking: "You wondering how Maggie made it over the Pass? The Siwash carried her. At a dollar-sixty a pound all the way to Bennett. It cost her four hundred and twelve dollars."

He drew two cards. The touch of them seemed strange after so many weeks along the trails. Strange but good, like the first cigarette to a shipwrecked man. Annie had inhaled deeply and was talking smoke from her lungs, telling about others from the Barbary Coast that had hit the Yukon trail. Carmody, Barber Jack, the Blue-Faced Kid. He kept drawing cards from the box, his old touch rapidly coming back. Below, Blackmore strung a bet, coppered it, and watched Kelly's fingers with unhidden admiration.

Silver Annie was saying, " . . . Sure, old Charley Wong. He hit here yesterday with a fan-tan spread, and a canful of junk, too, or I don't know my Hop Sings, so you see the *boo-ha-doy* didn't get him after all." Then she said without moving her lips, her voice scarcely audible beneath Kelly's left ear, "What in hell you doing with a wolf like Blackmore, Kelly?"

"He's all right."

"You better sleep with your six shooter in your hand."

"You know I always do."

She took a long drag and dumped her cigarette, crushed it beneath her slipper toe, "I wish I did."

Kelly laughed and slid two more cards from the box. "Case seven," the case-keeper said in his monotonous voice, clicking the abacus beads behind them.

She said, "So you're in with Blackie, hauling the old Bird of Paradise through. I hear you got mirrors, bar and all. And maybe that favorite wheel, the one Carmody booted over. It had more wires and electromagnets than a dynamo."

Kelly laughed.

"You look out for McGowan, Kelly. You're here ahead of him and he'll be on the prod."

He spoke from the side of his mouth without changing his deadpan expression. "Now you have two men killing me."

"It's just that I worry about you, boy." She was only half joking. She went on with her voice a bare whisper, "Laugh at me and I'll put a slug through you myself. My Gawd, who'd think I'd ever want to mother somebody? And *you*. To pick *you!* You're the worst kind—the kind that buries their past down inside them and never talks in their sleep. I know you're hard as a rock all through, but that soft face of yours always gets me."

"You staying here in White Horse, Annie?"

"I'll drift for the Klondike before snow flies." She smiled and said, "And that's when *you'll* be getting through, the way boats have been stacking up, looking for pilots. You know how many there are ahead of you?"

"Eight hundred, but we'll get through."

"When?"

Blackmore heard her and answered, "Tomorrow."

"Like hell. Not unless you try shooting those rapids yourself. And in that case they'll be bringing you up in the Siwash fish nets down at Five Fingers next August. Bodies don't float very well in this Yukon water."

Kelly said, "I'll land on my feet."

"That's what they all say!"

## CHAPTER V

### BOOM CAMP

AT DAWN, Kelly walked along bleak, basaltic cliffs and looked down on the most feared stretch of water in the North.

The river was running heavy with ice from the break-up of Lake Marsh thirty miles upstream, and the thud and boom of it could be heard continuously over the steady roar of water.

The first quarter-mile of rapids was a swift but not particularly dangerous stretch ending in a whirlpool at mid-canyon. After a lazy swing there it rolled amid projecting crags down a stretch called Squaw Rapids, and then took its final plunge through the White Horse proper. The pilots had been right. It was an even chance that any boat risking the rapids now would be ground to bits by float ice.

A fine sleet was slanting from upriver, freezing in a transparent glaze across rocks as he picked his way back to the camp where Blackmore was just crawling from his blankets.

"So you think I'm stuck in this camp!" Blackmore muttered, reading the expression on his face. "Go ahead and say it. Say I'm stuck here whether I like it or not!"

"*We're* stuck here."

Blackmore made a wry face and spat. He'd had a trifle too much to drink in those tent saloons the night before and it had left him with an evil temper.

"All right, *we're* stuck here," Blackmore said. "I'm damned sorry I forgot about your ten per cent interest in this spread. You'd leave us stuck with Diamond Jack coming down from Bennett and the snow going to hell under our sled runners down at Lebarge."

Kelly's voice was unusually soft when he said, "You want to run those rapids today? Well, run them and be damned. You take the first barge through and if you come up breathing I'll follow you."

"Why don't you take the first one through?"

"Because if somebody wants to commit suicide I'd rather it would be you."

Blackmore stood with his head and shoulders bent against the slanting roof of the tent and pulled on his blanket-lined pants. Sleet was still coming and here and there little beads of moisture formed on the underside of the canvas and ran down.

"What a hell of a country!" Blackmore said.

In an hour the sleet had turned to snow and by night the muck of White Horse City was rough and frozen underfoot. Float ice let up for a while, and at dawn boats commenced shooting the rapids but in an hour the ice was thicker than ever.

Blackmore walked up from the lower White Horse and said, "One of those Canuck pilots got it in Squaw Rapids. A block of ice caught him and sawed his bateau in half, but the *chechakhos* made it, an even dozen of 'em. That's the way luck runs, isn't it?"

"Make a deal?" He knew Blackmore was dickering for some bateaux.

"I made one."

Next day a long raft came in sight and tied up along some cottonwood banks a mile upstream. It was the outfit of Diamond Jack McGowan.

A BLIZZARD had started during the afternoon. At ten P.M. there was still a sort of twilight, but candles in the saloons had long been lighted, giving the canvas roofs a brightness like phosphorescence through the eddying snow. There was a stream of men from one place to the next. Voices, music discord, the flutter and snap of canvas in the wind mixed with the rapids to make the boom-camp sound that men were to remember always afterward as White Horse.

Horseshoe Kelly, after making a round of the street, stopped in front of the Silver Palace and when an opening afforded it-

self, went through the door. He paused there with his eyes making an habitual survey of the crowd, then he went on, past men who were mobbed around the bar drinking *hoochinoo* at four bits a shot. Silver Annie was at her usual place by the faro spread.

He walked up, let a silver dollar fall on the cloth, coppered it.

"That's a case card," she said so low it forced him to bend forward to hear. Then she went on, "Diamond Jack McGowan's in camp."

Kelly shrugged.

"He's gunning for you. Didn't Blackmore tell you about it?"

"Did he know it?"

"You're damned right he knew it. Where is he?"

"Lower town."

"Good old Blackie!" She took time to light a cigarette and drag hard on it. "He's always willing to let the other man duck his bullets."

"You have it in for Blackie. He's not afraid of McGowan."

"The hell he isn't. Listen to me, Kelly, he's got a streak down his back as yellow as butter. He's tough but he's tough from behind. You'll do his dirty work, and afterward he'll deadfall you."

Kelly shrugged. Nothing showed on his face. "Why would McGowan be gunning for me?"

"Because you're the lad that tossed the gun on that Swede steamboater back at Bennett. You doublecrossed him on that boat—"

"He tried to doublecross *us*. Blackie had that boat contracted from the head office in Sitka."

"That's not the way McGowan tells it. You look out for him. He's hitting the bottle, and once he hits the bottle he goes on the prowl."

"All right. Thanks for the tip."

Kelly went outside. The blizzard struck him and he stood facing it, looking along the street. He wondered about Blackmore. He should have said something about McGowan before he left. If he knew, that was. Probably he hadn't. Annie hated him for something back in San Francisco.

His hand fell by habit to his waist. His gun was at camp. He went back for it. Jug Macure was crouched over a box, scrawling out a letter by the light of a grease-dip lantern. He watched with set displeasure on his bulldog face while Kelly got his gun and belt from his duffel.

"What the hell—you gunnin' for McGowan?"

"I'm not gunning for anybody."

"He's over town, and he's hittin' the hooch. You better stick around here till he cools off."

"I never ran from a man in my life."

"No, *you* wouldn't run. That's what makes a gunman out of a fellow—his damn fool pride. They don't want to kill anybody. You don't want to kill McGowan, but you'll go over there and get in front of him just because folks know he's gunning for you. Just to show you're Horseshoe Kelly and you're not afraid."

"That's how I was raised."

"Use your head, Kelly. It ain't you that should be shootin' it out with him. It ought to be Blackmore if—"

"This was one of the things I bought along with my ten per cent."

He went outside. His mackinaw was held by its three top buttons, hiding the gun, but leaving him free to draw—if he needed to.

He drifted up the crooked street, from one saloon to another. He wasn't looking for McGowan nor seeking to avoid him. He was merely there, in sight, if McGowan wanted him. Jug was right. It was a matter of pride. It was the thing that had made him what he was out of the motherless whelp cut adrift that night in McKetrick, and in the end it would be the thing that killed him. He knew it, but there was nothing he could do about it. It was the way he'd been raised.

He walked through the Seattle Bar and inside a back room where professional gamblers were in the habit of gathering for a game among themselves. There were four of them there, and tonight, as usual, they were playing hearts.

Kelly sat in. The stakes were high, and his first hand cost him three hundred dollars, the second a hundred and seventy-five. Bronco Johnny was shuffling cards and Slader was talking in a casual way, recounting some piece of gossip about the lower river. The door opened, and a man stood looking in on them. Slader went on

talking, but Kelly knew his mind wasn't on it. He also knew without looking who was at the door. He kept his hands near the edge of the table, but swung his shoulders in a movement that opened his mackinaw. Then with studied lack of concern he turned his eyes on the door.

He'd seen Diamond Jack McGowan on the street in Bennett, but they'd never spoken. Even now there was no real indication that McGowan knew who he was. He spoke to Slader, calling him by name, nodded to the others, and walked on to the table.

HE was slightly under average height, slim, with a carefully poised way of carrying himself. He was about fifty, with a bloodless face that would have fit a banker or a merchant of the more conservative type. He took off his mackinaw and mittens, revealing a diamond as large as a sparrow's egg on the third finger of his right hand. Another diamond, canary yellow, glittered in a stickpin that held the loose knot of his ascot tie. He carried a Colt pistol with mother-of-pearl stocks around his waist, high, gambler's style.

He hooked a chair with the toe of his moccasin and sat down. An odor of alcohol came with him, but he wasn't drunk. He drew a buckskin bag weighted as though it had a flatiron inside and dumped out a heap of gold coins. He stacked it. It totaled about two thousand dollars. While doing these things he'd scarcely glanced at Kelly, but anyone could feel the tension that had settled over the game.

After fifteen minutes, Bronco Johnny got up, saying the game was too rich for him, and Jordan left on the same pretext. Only McGowan, Slader and Kelly remained in the room.

McGowan riffled the cards in his immaculate, bloodless fingers and said, "Hearts is no three-handed game."

"Solo?" Slader asked.

"Let's have Kelly name one."

It was the first indication that McGowan even knew his name.

"Draw poker."

They played a hand and Diamond Jack said, "You know who I am, Kelly?"

"Sure."

"I'm McGowan, the man you lifted that steam tug from back in Bennett."

Kelly met his gaze with studied coolness. His hands, resting on the edge of the table, seemed limp. Only his eyes showed that something was going on inside him. "Say what's on your mind."

"All right. I'm a gambler and I don't complain when the cards turn against me, but nobody ever steals a trick from me twice."

"We didn't doublecross you on that tug. We hired it—from headquarters at Sitka."

Kelly's tone, the conviction of it, seemed to surprise McGowan as much as his words. "You sounded like you really believed that."


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Kelly waited and the man went on, "I'm the one who spoke for that tug, and I'm the one who laid down the cash for use of it. In Sitka. And before Blackmore ever left Seattle."

Kelly decided he was talking for Slader's benefit.

McGowan went on talking, his tone still casual, "You were looking for me tonight—what did you want?"

"I think it was the other way around. You were looking for me, and here I am."

McGowan let a laugh jerk his shoulders. The diamond on his hand made a streak of fire as he made an habitual motion at his chin. "Maybe we just wanted to play cards."

McGowan commenced dealing the cards, and Slader breathed as though he'd been holding it for a long time.

Kelly won a pot and lost a couple. Then he hit a streak of luck and raked in five pots in a row. Neither Slader nor McGowan had money in front of them. Slader slid back from the table with a signal that he was through, but McGowan remained where he was.

"Table stakes?"

"Your word's good."

"Put your stack in your pocket, Kelly. If you're a gambler, I'll make you a real bet. Half interest in my outfit against your half interest in Blackie's."

"You're on a cold trail."

"You mean you won't bet?"

"I don't own half of the Paradise, and I wouldn't bet it if I did."

"You mean you wouldn't want me for a partner if you won?" Spots of color had appeared in Diamond Jack's cheeks. The deck of cards was in his hand, clenched and doubled. He hurled it. The cards struck the wall a compact bunch and sprayed back across the room. He was standing, backing away. The backs of his legs struck the chair and it fell. Slader was on his feet against the wall. Kelly hadn't moved except to lean forward across the green-covered table.

"Take it easy," Slader said.

Kelly's left forearm was planted on the table, the fingertips of his right rested lightly on the edge. He could feel the muzzle of his holstered gun against the inside of his left thigh and could sense the position of the butt projecting to the right. He watched Diamond Jack's eyes. After a couple of seconds he knew that the moment had passed—Diamond Jack was not going to draw.

"All right," McGowan said. "I gave you your chance. Don't cross me again or I'll make wolf bait of you."

HE fumbled behind him, using his left hand, found the latch, opened the door, backed out. The room seemed hot and stifling. Kelly slid back on the hind legs of his chair and felt for his makings. He started to roll a cigarette. The edge of his nerves broke and some of the tobacco spilled. He looked down at his fingers for a while, holding them very still, then he went on, rolling the cigarette round and firm.

He said, "Did Jack really think I was gunning for him?"

"Weren't you?"

"If I'd been gunning for him he'd have known it when he walked inside the door."

Kelly dragged on the cigarette for a while, then he made a rude purse of his handkerchief, and put the gold in his pocket. It dragged the side of his mackinaw with its fifteen or eighteen pounds of weight. He went to the other room. McGowan was not in sight. Outside, the blizzard was still blowing, carrying eddying currents of snow. He decided he needed a drink and stopped at the Board of Trade Bar, and after downing a short one walked on to the faro table to place some bets. The steady dead-pan flow of the game quieted him and let him view the events of the past hour with detachment. McGowan had said some things and he'd said them in a certain way, as though he was telling the truth—about contracting for the tug down in Sitka before Blackmore left Seattle, and about hearing that Kelly was gunning for him.

The crowd commenced thinning out. Kelly turned from the table with his pockets heavier than ever with gold coin. He was hot tonight, and he'd have backed his streak to the limit, only there was a bigger gamble waiting down there at the river. He had no doubt that his ten per cent would be worth twenty-five or even fifty thousand if they could get through

and make the Paradise the top place in Dawson.

He stopped at the Silver Palace. Annie called his name, and he waited while she left the faro table and weaved through the crowd toward him.

"You better get out, Kelly."

"Now who's going to kill me?" he asked with soft amusement.

"No joke. McGowan—"

"I have a surprise for you. I already saw McGowan. I played cards with him. He decided not to shoot me after all."

"When did you see him?"

"A couple of hours ago."

"He just left here. He'd been hitting the bottle and he was on the prod. He claimed you stole half a dozen bateaux from him."

"Stole!"

"Well, bought them when he already owned options."

Kelly laughed.

"He's dangerous when he gets drunk. He thinks you doublecrossed him, and I suppose he's right."

"All right, Annie. I'll go home and have Jug tuck me into bed."

He knew it would be best to keep out of sight and let McGowan cool off. He turned toward the door. Men at the bar were looking at him. He wondered if they'd overheard what Annie had said. It seemed to make a difference. Jug was right when he'd said it was pride that made a gunman of you.

He stood outside. Light, shining through a canvas saloon briefly silhouetted a man headed that way. Recognition jolted him. It was Diamond Jack McGowan.

The chances were against McGowan having seen him. He moved away, stepped inside the door of the Sourdough Club. He kept telling himself it was useless shooting it out with the man. The odds were at least even that McGowan would kill him. But that wasn't the whole reason. If he killed McGowan, there'd be somebody else looking for him, and someone else after that. Sometimes it's easier to blast out a reputation than it is to live it down.

He paused at the rear of the long, smoke-filled room to glance back. No one looked at him, probably no one knew who he was. He opened the door and was outside.

He'd expected it to be darker out the back way. Light shone through tents and spread a pale glow across the stormy whiteness. No one had been that way for hours and his were the first tracks through ankle-deep snow. A tent rope tripped him. He saved himself, circled it. The door opened behind him.

McGowan. He was outlined for a couple of seconds with yellow candlelight behind him. About thirty paces away. He saw Kelly's tracks, but the brightness of inside was still in his eyes. Kelly could have moved out of sight, but he didn't. He'd been forcing himself to keep out of McGowan's way, but he didn't force himself any longer. In a brief instant of decision he jerked open his mackinaw, turned, and said, "Looking for me, Jack?"

"Yes, you cheap tin-horn!"

Diamond Jack McGowan spun and drew all in the same moment. He was quicker than any man had a right to expect. In that split fragment of time, Kelly realized he'd been outdrawn. He hurled himself with his left shoulder toward the snow while bringing the gun up from his right hip.

McGowan's gun exploded. Kelly briefly realized that the bullet was whipping past a foot above his cheek.

His own gun bucked in his hand.

Force of the heavy lead smashed McGowan back, bending him in the middle.

McGowan fired again, the bullet cutting a riffle in snow half way between them. He was tripping forward with the gun still in his hand.

Kelly lay propped on his left elbow and fired twice more. The bullets turned McGowan halfway around, smashing the life out of him.

## CHAPTER VI

### LAW OF THE STAMPEDE

NO ONE paid the least attention to Kelly as he walked against the running crowd along Main Street. He stopped. An odor of fresh burned powder seemed to cling to him. It was the gun under his mackinaw. He wondered if anyone

had recognized him when he preceded McGowan through the Sourdough Club. He decided to go back inside.

They'd carried McGowan's body in and laid it on a card table. Kelly was tall, and he might have glimpsed it with a little effort, but he kept his eyes the other way. A dozen men were talking at once, each giving his own theory of the shooting, but none of them mentioned his name.

After three or four minutes he turned and commenced working his way through the late-comers that jammed the door. There was new excitement, and someone was shouting, "Make way. Let her through!"

He knew who it would be. Lila McGowan—Diamond Jack's daughter.

They made a narrow passage for her, and Kelly could see the fringe of the parka hood she had drawn over her head. Then she turned and he glimpsed her face.

It was a shock to see that she was small, and young, and so obviously frightened.

Her eyes were on him for only a second, but it seemed to him that she knew who he was and what he had done. He wanted to say something, to stop her and tell her that it hadn't been his choosing, that Diamond Jack had hunted him down, had followed and drawn first, that he'd fired first. But he didn't speak. He merely

*In that split fragment of time, Kelly realized he'd been outdrawn.*

watched her as she walked toward the table.

It had become almost silent in the room. The air seemed hot and its oxygen exhausted. Her voice came to him, quiet and resigned.

"He's dead." Evidently no one had told her that, though she'd expected it. "I wonder if some of you would carry him over to our camp. I'd like to have some other clothes on him." She was holding her emotions under taut control and it made her voice sound a trifle brittle.

A man asked, "Miss, you haven't any ideas about who would—"

"No ideas. Do any of you know if there's a minister in the camp?"

Somebody right at Kelly's elbow answered, "There's a holy roller they call the Parson yonder in Finn Town."

"Do you know his name?"

"I'll go fetch him for you, but outside of them calling him the Parson . . ."

Kelly made it outside. Cold air failed to help. He walked toward the river. The tent was dark, but a man was standing just outside the flap. He recognized the squat outline of Jug Macure. He was waiting for him.

"How'd it happen?" Jug asked.

"I tried to stay out of his way. He followed me. We shot it out behind the Sourdough. I didn't see him go for his gun, so he got the first one in, but it was high."

"He had it coming to him. He's had it coming for a long time."

"So have I." Jug stared, and Kelly went on, "The country would be better off without either of us. I had a bullet coming to me when I took my gun and went back over town."

"Oh, hell! Diamond Jack carried half a dozen notches. He's been asking for an ounce of lead for the past ten years."

It helped a little to hear Jug say that, but he still couldn't get the picture of the girl out of his mind.

"How'd you know about it?" he asked.

"I was over town. I just got back." Then he added, "I heard some other things, too. Now, don't get on the prod, but I have a good idea that Blackie framed you into that row with Diamond Jack."

"What'd you hear?"

"I was up at the Board of Trade and the faro dealer said you were out gunning for him—for Jack. Had you shooting off your lip saying Jack was yellow. I knew it was a lie because that's not your style. I asked the dealer if *he'd* heard you. *No,* he says, *but I had it on damned good authority.* Know who he said told him? The Piegan Kid!"

Kelly didn't say anything, but the narrow savagery of his eyes made Jug grab him by the arm and swing him around. "Kelly, wait! I wouldn't told you if I thought you'd get ringy. You got to look out. Nobody has any proof it was you shot it out with Jack, but if you go for the Kid those Mounties will be down on you as sure as you're born. I shouldn't have—"

"It's all right. Don't worry about me."

"Listen. *I* didn't hear the Piegan Kid tell it. I only—"

"I know. Where is he now?"

"Inside. Asleep."

"He may be inside, but I'll lay blue chips he's not asleep."

KELLY went in and lighted the lantern. The Piegan Kid was lying on his bunk with his eyes closed, breathing regularly. Kelly didn't say anything. He walked on, got a bottle of whiskey, pulled the cork. Then he decided against having a drink and put it back.

Someone was coming. He could hear the tiny creak and crunch that moccasins make in snow.

He stood by the lantern rolling a cigarette when Blackmore appeared in the tent door. He finished and raised the lantern to light it before speaking.

"Kelly!" Blackmore said with his usual joviality. He'd gone back to his big, black fur coat and it made him seem huge as he came forward, stripping his mittens. He spread his hands to warm them over the chimney. "Well, Kelly, I grabbed off those bateaux that Diamond Jack thought he had sewed up. Two thousand apiece, and that makes them just about the most expensive pieces of lumber north of fifty-three. But they ought to cinch it for us. There's nothing Jack can do now but build new ones or wait his turn with one of the other outfits. No matter how you figure it, it'll take him three weeks to a month."

"You know he's dead, Blackie."

Kelly wasn't asking if he knew it, he was saying that Blackmore *did* know.

Blackmore met Kelly's eyes and decided not to pretend. "All right. I knew it. I heard when I was coming up from lower town. I thought I'd let you—"

"Seeing I did it, hey?"

"Why, yes."

"How'd you know it was me that killed him? Nobody else did."

"Why—" He stopped. His eyes were

narrowed, watching Kelly, trying to judge his temper. "Why. I guessed. That's all. I knew how he felt about—us."

"You pulled out for lower town at the right time, didn't you?"

"What are you getting at?"

The Piegan Kid had been awake all the time, but he made no pretense at being aroused by the voices. He sat up and placed his feet on the ground. He was wearing long gray underwear, sox and moccasins, having only removed his trousers on going to bed. His holstered gun was lying among the blankets within easy reach.

Kelly turned and looked at him. "Come here, Kid. You're in on this, too. I might as well talk to you both."

The Piegan Kid's face was flat and expressionless, with his Blackfoot dominating his white blood. He started pulling on his trousers.

Kelly went on, "Diamond Jack heard I was gunning for him. Somebody passed the word around town that I said he was yellow. He was drunk and the story put him on the prod. The whole thing was timed pretty well."

Blackmore said, "Oh, what the hell? It's water down the river now, isn't it? He's flat and we're finished with him, and don't expect me to draw a long face about it."

"He's dead, and you were a long way out of range. And that was the way you wanted it. But before you left you sent the Piegan Kid to peddle some stories."

Blackmore's face had hardened. He looked huge, standing with his shoulders back, the muscles thickened, his hands opening and closing. He was fighting to control his fury.

"If you're trying to say I was too yellow to meet McGowan and framed you into doing it . . ."

"I don't know whether you framed it or not."

There was no change in Kelly's attitude indicated by his words or tone. The truth was he didn't know. Things get to going the rounds in a boom camp and nobody knows where they start. The Piegan Kid was standing with the holstered gun and folded belt in his hands. Kelly's eyes didn't travel that way, but he saw him.

Blackmore said, "Damn it, I'm not taking—" and he checked himself. "Oh, what the hell? Let's not row about this thing. Come on and have a drink."

Kelly didn't seem to hear him. "Why didn't you tell me the truth about that tug?"

"Now what—"

"You said you'd contracted it from the head office of Yukon Transportation down in Sitka. Now I have good reason to believe that Diamond Jack already had it leased for the break-out trip before you ever came up from Seattle."

"What of it? I told you I was out to win. One way or another I was going to put the Bird of Paradise in Dawson City ahead of him. I needed the tug and I got it. What's got into you, Kelly? You knew I wasn't a missionary when you teamed up with me. I never had a feel for the finer points of ethics, and by the gods you haven't, either. Now stop acting like a Bible-shouter and have a drink."

He grabbed the bottle of whiskey and lifted it in a toast. "To *us*. To *me*. That was the toast we started out with. Every man for himself. That's the law of the stampede, Kelly. Let's not forget it!"

## CHAPTER VII

### ACE IN THE HOLE

THE BLIZZARD had blown itself out, and the sun came through, blinding bright across new snow. A procession of men in single file climbed one of the low rises of ground overlooking the river, following the handsled that carried the body of Diamond Jack McGowan. Afterward there was little for the boom camp to do except wait for the river to clear. Hour by hour bigger volumes of ice seemed to be coming down from Lake Marsh.

In the afternoon, Blackmore's new-bought bateaux were portaged around the cliff trail, and as there was still no chance of running cargo through the rapids, he had the French-Canuck pilots up-end them for calking and repairs.

Night had settled. Kelly walked down to watch the French-Canucks finish up with the bateaux bottoms. Blackmore saw him and said, "Something's eating on you. What is it, that girl?"

Kelly made a noncommittal answer.

"Don't let her pretty face fool you. She's able to take care of herself. And that outfit she's got is worth two hundred thousand no matter when she gets it through to Dawson. Hell, she's better off with Diamond Jack out of the way. But I'm not a man that likes to throw the hooks into a woman, so I'm going to settle with her for these bateaux. I'll pay what Jack dropped on the options, anyway. I thought I'd tell you if it'd make you feel better."

"I think that's mighty decent. For you."

"Don't throw it in, Kelly."

Kelly laughed, and Blackmore left without knowing quite how he'd intended the words.

The bateau men had finished and were seated with their evening pipes. They were rough, red-faced men who all day carried on a shouting conversation in French.

Kelly watched them, but he was thinking of the girl. A damp breeze blew from the direction of Lake Marsh. It was sharp with a pine odor, and now and then he caught the smell of the mixed tobacco and red willow bark the men smoked in their pipes.

The Piegan Kid as usual was on the prowl with his Winchester. He moved silently down through willow brush and listened for a while. Smell of the strong tobacco or the French tongue must have had a nostalgic effect on him, making him remember the lodges of his mother's people, for he moved on and leaned his Winchester against the near bateau. He said something in Coyotie-French which the *voyageurs* understood. They greeted him as one of them, and in another half-minute he'd become part of the circle, taking his turn at the pipes which were now being passed, Indian style.

Kelly stood by the river, listening to the grind and roar of it as it flowed swift and dark and cold toward the Arctic. Something about it always made him feel sad and restless. He was there for five or ten minutes, his mind glazed by the steady sound of it, when something snapped his contemplation and made him glance back at the bateaux. A dark form had moved down through willow brush and was standing a couple of steps back of the Piegan Kid.

He thought it was a short man dressed in a long parka, then there was a movement and a shine of rifle metal and he knew it was a girl. Lila McGowan.

He dropped to one knee, finding protection behind one of the boats. She hadn't noticed him. He was sure of that. Melting snow made no sound beneath his mukluks as he moved up the band from one bateau to the next.

The Canucks were still talking in their boisterous voices, but one of them had straightened and was staring at the girl. The Piegan Kid suddenly sensed that something was wrong. He spun around, but the movement froze when he saw the Winchester aimed at his heart.

"Don't start any trouble," she said quietly.

The Kid was rigid, very straight. His eyeballs looked pointed; they remained immovably on the gun muzzle. His own rifle was only arm's reach away, but it would be suicide going for it. None of the bateau men were armed.

"I came for my boats," she said.

Kelly was quite close. He stopped,


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crouched on one knee, watching over an upended bateau bottom. Men kept passing along the main river trail only thirty or forty paces away, and a fire was burning down the shore, but no one noticed anything unusual.

The Piegan Kid's teeth shone briefly in the firelight when he said, "All alone you do this?"

"They're my boats and I'm taking them. Don't try anything foolish. I don't want to waste a bullet on you. They want two-bits for a thirty-thirty cartridge here on the *inside*."

The Kid had a weasel mind, and it was working, watching for an opening. Someone was walking over from the tent. She couldn't see him, but the Kid could. Kelly watched and recognized Jug Macure.

Jug didn't seem to suspect anything. He was walking with his steady, slouching pace. A stone clattered, and its unexpected closeness made the girl spin around. For an instant the Winchester was aimed across the river, and with the sudden quickness of a rattler, the Kid's hand darted and closed on its action.

She pulled the trigger instinctively, but the soft web of his thumb was between the hammer and the firing pin.

She ripped back and carried him off balance. It seemed for a moment she might get the gun away from him. But he got his footing and with a powerful twist, tore it from her hands.

He backed away with the gun leveled waist high. He grinned and said, "Now you were saying . . ."

Kelly was standing. Everyone there except the Piegan Kid could see him, and the Kid kept backing and would have run into him. Kelly had lifted his Colt, seemed to appraise its weight, and then, with a swift, overhand movement, laid its barrel hard against his skull.

The Piegan Kid went forward over bent knees. He struck the wet snow cheek first and skidded forward. He was limp with the Winchester loose in front of him.

"There's your gun," Kelly said to the girl.

She bent and snatched it up, cocked it, whirled, trying to cover Jug and the bateau men all at the same time.

"What the devil?" Jug asked. He walked on and looked down on the Kid. A grin twisted his bulldog face. "Now we're gettin' someplace. That's what I wanted to do with this Injun four weeks ago, up atop the Chilkoot Pass."

The girl was looking at Kelly. She said, "You're Horseshoe Kelly!"

SHE MET her gaze. It wasn't an easy thing for him to do. She must have known Diamond Jack was looking for him the night before; she must have at least suspected he was the one who had shot it out with him, and killed him.

"Yes, I'm Horseshoe Kelly."

She nodded at the Piegan Kid and said, "Why did you do that?"

"I'm like Jug. I've been wanting to do it for a long time."

"I came here to take the boats. I still intend to do it."

"Go ahead. No one's going to stop you." He looked around at the French-Canucks. "You heard her, didn't you? She came here to take the bateaux. She has the gun. You'd better get them to moving."

There was someone else beyond the willow brush. For a second Kelly thought of Blackmore. It proved to be Ed Piprude, the raftsman that Diamond Jack had hired in Bennett.

"It's all right, Ed," Lila said. "No trouble."

Piprude grunted something. He was still suspicious, and remained half concealed with a rifle ready across his arm.

"Ace in the hole," Kelly said with a soft smile. "I should have known."

"Blame me?"

"Not a bit."

"Don't *you* always have an ace in the hole?"

"No, ma'am. I just play the percentages the way they stand. That's why I'm adrift here in White Horse."

"Adrift?"

"Yes, ma'am." He looked on while the Piegan Kid dragged himself to hands and knees. "Blackmore's not going to like me very well after the Kid tells his story."

The bateaux were launched in shallow water, strung together, and lined upstream toward a cottonwood point that hid McGowan's raft.

When they were well on their way, Kelly walked off toward the tent. The

girl called after him, "Kelly! Come around if you're looking for passage to Dawson."

"All right. Maybe we'll take you up on that—Jug and I."

The tent was dark and empty. He lighted the lantern.

Jug followed and said, "I don't relish being in here with that damned light."

"Then hurry and get your warsack packed."

Jug was finished in a couple of minutes, but Kelly seemed to be consuming all the time he could.

Jug said, "He'll be along if you—"

"Blackie? That's all right. I'd like to tell him good bye. You go on up toward the raft."

"If you think I'd quit you—"

"Don't worry about me. I'll take care of this end."

Jug remained just outside the tent. In a minute or so he looked in and said, "Well, here he comes."

Blackmore had been running. He stopped when he caught sight of Kelly inside the tent. His face, when the lanternlight struck it, looked hollow and big-boned from the rage that burned inside him. After a momentary hesitation he came through the flap and covered the distance between them in four long strides. There he drew up, a towering man with muscles that tightened the shoulders of his red and green wool shirt.

"Hello, Blackie," Horseshoe Kelly said in a voice that had all the emotion drawn from it. "I'm leaving." He finished folding a white shirt that he'd kept spotless all the way from San Francisco, put it in the bag, and went on speaking, "You can forget all about that ten per cent. I was never meant for a first-class house like the Paradise."

Fury had momentarily robbed Blackmore of speech. He exploded in a stream of curses. Kelly waited until he'd spent himself, and said, "That's enough. Don't call me anything else."

The tone stopped Blackmore. He stood straight with his hands nervous just beneath his holstered gun. He was afraid of Kelly, and during those seconds it showed in his eyes.

He turned so his side was toward the door. His eyes shifted to the darkness outside and back again. Kelly already knew he had the Piegan Kid out there with his Winchester. Jug edged inside the tent and said, "Kelly, look out, he's got—"

"I know. The Kid's out there. Blackie can always be depended on to have the wheel rigged in his favor."

"You're damned right I can!" Blackmore sounded like his old self again. He looked at Kelly and his lips twisted in contempt. "I'm going to win whether you double-cross me or not. You cheap, two-bit tin horn. I picked you up when the seat was out of your pants and you didn't have five dollars in your pocket. I got you past the Mounties when they were ready to drag you down the Alaska side. I've fed you and put money in your pocket and bonded whiskey in your gut. And this is the way I get paid back for it. You double-cross me at the first look from some cheap skirt."

Kelly gave no sign of hearing. He lifted the warsack as though starting outside with it. Then he spun, placing Blackmore between himself and the door, and swung it at his head.

Blackmore seemed to expect the blow. He flung his forearm high, deflecting it. For a second he was off balance. Then he set his feet and smashed a left hook that Kelly partially blocked.

There was movement outside, a shouted warning from Jug. Kelly tried to reach the lantern and bat it to the ground. It was too far away.

"Out of the way!" the Piegan Kid hissed at Blackmore.

Kelly glimpsed him, crouched, with the rifle leveled.

"Hold it!" Blackmore said. He took a step to one side. The Kid moved forward little by little, sliding his moccasins. The rifle remained beaded down on Kelly's forehead. He was wet down the front from lying in the slush, and blood from the blow he'd taken had streaked from his scalp down one side of his neck.

"Put up your hands," Blackmore said.

Kelly obeyed. Blackmore lifted his gun and tossed it aside. Then he came around with a return movement and smashed Kelly to the ground.

The blow had been unexpected. He fell and lay as though he'd been struck

by an axe handle. He groped with his hands without knowing what he was doing, slowly he pulled himself to one knee. Blackmore waited patiently, then he leaped forward, driving his right foot to the side of Kelly's head.

Kelly went over backward, and Blackmore kicked him again and again.

He stopped. Exertion left him sweating and wheezing. He hitched up his pants. Kelly was still not quite out. He struggled to hands and knees. Hair was strung across his eyes. He forked it back. The hand came away smeared with blood. He looked at it dully. His gun was on the ground, shining metallic blue in the lantern light.

Blackmore cursed him, but no longer in white rage. He cursed him through bitter lips, spitting the words, slowly naming him every vile thing in his bawdry house vocabulary.

Kelly kept staring at the gun. It was too far away. Blackmore noticed the direction of his gaze. "Want it?"

He picked up the gun, rocked the hammer halfway, and punched out the cartridges.

"All right then, take it!"

With the words he reared back and hurled the gun with all his strength. Kelly knew it was coming and tried to move, but his muscles seemed to have turned thick and dead. The gun struck him a glancing blow across the head and wedged beneath him. He fumbled, his hand closed on the butt. The gun had put another cut on his face, and blood ran in a forked stream to drip off his chin. He kept staring up without actually seeing anything.

"Get out," Blackmore said. "Get out, Kelly. You're safe enough here, with those redcoats on the prowl, but if I catch sight of you downriver I'll kill you."

## CHAPTER VIII

### NEVER CARRY A GUN

IT WAS like waking up.

Kelly was at the edge of the river and Jug was helping him clean blood from his face.

"I'm all right now," he said.

His lips felt stiff from the swelling in them.

"I couldn't help you in there," Jug said regretfully.

"Of course you couldn't. I had it coming to me."

He remembered his gun and reloaded it.

"You ain't going back over there?"

Kelly laughed and said, "I feel like I'd argued enough with Blackie for one night."

It was a quarter-mile walk to the cottonwood point. A campfire was burning, reflecting across the river's grayish surface. The bateaux had been pulled from the water and upended, beyond them he could see a tent, and out in the river the raft tied by twin hawsers, rocking in the current.

Someone moved from shadow and he saw the blue gleam of gunmetal. It was the raftsman, Ed Piprude.

"It's all right, Ed."

"Maybe it is." He lowered his gun reluctantly. Then firelight struck Kelly's face. "What in hell'd you tangle with—a bobcat?"

Kelly said something and walked on to the camp. Two of the French-Canucks were making a bed under an upended bateau. A candle was burning in the tent and he could see Lila's shadow when she came to the flap.

"You *did* come!" There was relief in her voice. He knew how she felt. She might not entirely trust him, but it's tough facing a country like that by yourself. She saw the state of his face and said, "You had trouble with him."

"He beat hell out of me."

Jug said, "Did it while the Piegan Kid held a Winchester on him."

Her lips were tight. "He did that?"

"Blackie likes to play the sure things."

Piprude spoke from the the cottonwoods behind them, "Bottle yonder if you need a snort."

"I could take some grub instead. I haven't eaten since morning."

He hadn't eaten that morning, either. For some reason, the beating he'd taken made him hungry again.

Lila McGowan propped a skillet over the fire, fried pan-bread and bacon, made coffee. She had a way of doing things with abruptness and decision, of carrying her shoulders back, making her face hard, but

underneath Kelly thought she was just a scared kid about two thousand miles farther north than she should have been. He knew how she felt. He'd once been a scared kid himself cut adrift in a raw-rough world.

The shifting light of the fire gave her face a soft, amber illumination. He guessed her age at twenty or twenty-one.

He said, "If you get this outfit through to Dawson, then what?"

"I haven't thought beyond Dawson." Her brows were drawn together making a troubled furrow above her nose. "I'll need somebody to help run it. I don't know what kind of a deal you had with Blackmore, but I could probably make one just as good."

"I wasn't asking for a job."

"But I'm offering one."

"You don't know what you're saying."

She was looking at him very intently. "Just what do you mean?"

He didn't say what was on his mind, "I'd end up by double-crossing you just like I did Blackmore."

"No you wouldn't."

He could never take a job from her. Sooner or later she'd find out about that business back of the Sourdough Club. And even if she didn't, he'd always know, and he would feel the lie he was living every time he looked at her. You can't kill a man and then cut yourself in on part of his outfit . . .

While he ate she sat crosslegged on a robe, watching him. Nothing had been said for the space of five minutes, but he knew she was still thinking about her offer and his refusal.

"Then I'll do it alone," she said. "I expected to, anyway. Ever since Seattle, and before. I had a feeling that the odds were due to run out on him."

She said good-night and went inside the tent. He could see her shadow as she took down her hair and braided it.

"Call me for my turn at watch," she called, and blew out the candle.

Kelly sat and drank black coffee. She'd said those things about the percentages in an impersonal way, as though talking to herself. He knew she'd meant it for him. She was trying to say that Diamond Jack had been lucky to stay alive as long as he had, and that he'd been bound to get it from somebody's gun—if not there, then at Lebarge, or certainly in Dawson. She knew who had killed him, all right.

Ed Piprude came in to pour a cup of coffee for himself. He drank it in silence. The fire had shrunk to coals. Piprude tossed away the heel of his coffee and leaned to put his cup away in the plunder box. He spun at a sound among the cottonwoods, his gun leveled.

"No trouble." It was the Piegan Kid. He'd stopped at the edge of the undergrowth, one hand upraised in a signal of friendship. "You savvy? No trouble."

Piprude said, "If you ain't looking for trouble you came to a poor place."

"You wait, talk. You be damn sorry you don't talk, you savvy?" The Kid was educated better than most white men, but like many breeds he thought there was an advantage in playing up his Indian. He looked at Kelly. "You too. I save you trouble—"

"Who you got with you?"

"All alone. See? No gun. Only bowie. You come here."

Kelly remained hunkered by the fire. "How about *you* coming *here?*"

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"Don't want Blackmore to see I come here. Come. You see what I got. See what I sell."

Piprude let the rifle hang in the bend of his arm and walked closer. The Kid was feeling in his hip pocket. He was stalling, and realization of that made Kelly a trifle more suspicious than he was already.

His eyes made a slow sweep up and down the bank. Other fires were burning along shore. The raft was a big, black shadow swinging gently in the river current.

"Get your rifle and cache yourself back of the tent," he growled to Jug.

The Kid's eyes followed Jug out of sight and moved back to Kelly. He'd taken a crumpled manila envelope from his pocket. For an instant his eyes were focused on something in the river, and Kelly turned in time to glimpse a skiff as it slid from sight behind the raft.

He watched for it to reappear. Instead, the raft dipped slightly, and started waves jiggling across the current backwater. An instant later the raft commenced swinging in arc away from shore and Kelly realized that someone had cut the upstream hawser.

He ran. It was ten long strides to water's edge. The river dropped off quickly and he was hip-deep in freezing water. Ice and slush impeded him. The raft kept swinging away. The current struck him suddenly and the rocky bottom seemed to tilt and slide from under his feet.

He was fighting water with mackinaw and gun pulling him down. Somehow he managed to shed them and come to the surface. The raft's log gunwale was there, just above him. He seized it and pulled himself over the side.

FOR A few seconds he coughed water. There was a movement near him. He groped, found the edge of a tarp, and pulled himself to his feet. He saw Blackmore with a hatchet in his hand moving toward the forward hawser.

Kelly sprang, but he was too late, and the hatchet descended, cutting the tight-stretched rope. The raft slipped away, riding amid drift-ice.

For a few seconds, the two men faced each other, only a step separating them. Blackmore moved back, trying to get room to use his weapon, but the rail stopped him.

He said, "Let's get off this thing, Kelly. There's a skiff at the far side. If you still want to fight it out we'll do it on shore."

"We'll get *the raft* ashore."

"We can't fight this current with a steering sweep."

"Then we'll ride it through the rapids."

Blackmore moved to his right, half turned. It gave him an extra foot of space, and he tried to swing the hatchet, but Kelly sprang, got inside its arc. The heavy steel jolted his shoulder and glanced off. He ripped a right to Blackmore's jaw. The hatchet struck the deck and bounded to the water. For an instant Blackmore was on his heels, bent over the rail. He wrapped both arms around Kelly, they reeled, fell to the deck.

Blackmore's weight was to his advantage in a test of strength, but there was no time for a thing like that with the rapids so close. He let go, pushed himself up. When Kelly followed, he continued the movement and fell backward, striking the deck doubled-up with knees beneath his chin.

Kelly saw it coming. He twisted to one side, but Blackmore's hobnailed boots struck him a glancing blow with force enough to smash him against the cargo. Something tripped him. He went face-forward across the damp deck boards.

The edge was there, and the rail too high to save him. His clawing fingers found a crevice between the whipsawed plank. It stopped him with half his body dangling over the side.

Blackmore saw him and leaped forward, swinging his heavy boots. He smashed Kelly's head to one side. His fingers slipped. He was falling as Blackmore swung his boot again, and with a desperate grab Kelly got hold of it.

Blackmore cursed, seized the rail with one hand, tried to rip himself free, but Kelly held on and rose to his feet.

He still had hold of one leg, and he dumped Blackmore to the deck. When the big man tried to get up, Kelly pivoted, driving a doubled knee to the side of his head.

It stunned him. He reeled up anyway. Kelly was himself again by then, and he

*He swung the steering sweep with all his strength, but it seemed to be useless.*

set his heels wide and smashed a one-two that rocked Blackmore's head from side to side.

Blackmore's cap was gone. Hair was strung over his stunned eyes. He was still up, but when he tried to retreat, one of his legs collapsed and he sat down.

"No, Kelly!" he whispered. "Don't be —fool. We got—to get off."

"Get up."

"No. I had enough. Listen . . ."

He was on one knee with his hands propped in front of him. And from that position, he sprang.

His shoulder was aimed at Kelly's middle, and the power of his charge would probably have carried the lighter man overboard. But Kelly was ready for it. He moved, only a little, but it was enough.

Blackmore made a wild grab and had hold of Kelly's shirt. Kelly's fist came around again. It struck his unprotected jaw like a blackjack.

Blackmore reeled with hands tossed high. He struck the rail, and toppled overboard.

For a second he was visible, threshing water. Then he disappeared amid the swift crush of float ice.

Kelly groped, found the rail. He was dizzy and unsure of himself now. He kept watching the river surface, gray in the halflight of approaching dawn, but Blackmore did not reappear.

He looked around. The raft was being carried swiftly between the walls of Miles

Canyon. It was already in the first swift descent of White Horse Rapids.

He followed the rail, climbed to the steering platform which had been built on the stern, grabbed the sweep. The raft was rocking with ton masses of float ice bump-bumping its sides. This was the whirlpool he had seen from above.

He was being drawn to the vortex. He sank the steering sweep, swung it with all his strength. It seemed to be useless. He kept it up, and slowly the raft angled a few precious feet; then current struck its side and it was carried toward the crag-filled stretch known as Squaw Rapids.

No use trying to steer. The descent was a series of plunges. Ice and water each time rolled over the bow. The current was carrying the raft directly down on a crag that glistened black with a white froth of foam around it.

The crag seemed to be aimed at the raft's middle. He was up again, swinging the sweep. His strength was nothing against the will of the river. At the final second a cross-current carried the raft to one side, but not far enough. There was a splinter of wood and for a moment the raft hung at a ten degree angle with its starboard side two feet under water. Then it slipped with a series of jerks and rode off through the final plunge of the White Horse proper.

It was over, and Kelly was there with the raft still under him. It seemed to be standing still, but current was still carrying them, for he could see the shacks and tents of the lower town moving by.

He got the sweep going. A man was rowing out in a skiff with a tow-rope. He made fast and other men ran up along shore to pull the raft in.

He could hear one man's voice above the rest saying, "That's what I always said a man needed to go through when float ice was on the water. A raft instead of them lightweight bateaux. . . ."

A mounted policeman met Kelly on shore. He had a set of binoculars in his hand. "Weren't there two of you? I saw—"

"He went overboard. Blackmore."

"Rex Blackmore?"

"Yes."

He shook his head and thumped Kelly's shoulder. "Tough! But isn't this McGowan's raft? Say, you mean he got killed taking his worst enemy's outfit through? There's a story to tell to your grandchildren!"

"He was a hero," Kelly said. "There ought to be a monument to him right here at the foot of White Horse."

Kelly was soaked. The breeze made him feel like he was standing in ice water. He went through his pockets and money belt, located about four hundred in gold. There was an outfitter's where he obtained new clothes. He stopped after paying, to look at a new Colt revolver. It had a fine, crisp action.

"Sell it for ninety-five bucks," the trader said.

Kelly tossed it aside. "I never carry a gun," he said and went outside. He took the trail downriver. A mining outfit had just completed the transfer of some steam-thawing equipment to a barge for the next leg of its journey to Dawson.

"You just take that raft through the rapids?" the owner asked him.

"I'm the one."

"I don't suppose you'd consider a pilot's job as far as Lebarge?"

"Make it all the way to Dawson and I'm your man."

THE RAFT had been tied in shallow water for an hour when Jug Macure and Lila McGowan came down from the upper camp. Kelly was gone, and a long search of the town didn't reveal him.

"He left," she said.

After a long silence Jug spoke: "There's something maybe I ought to tell you."

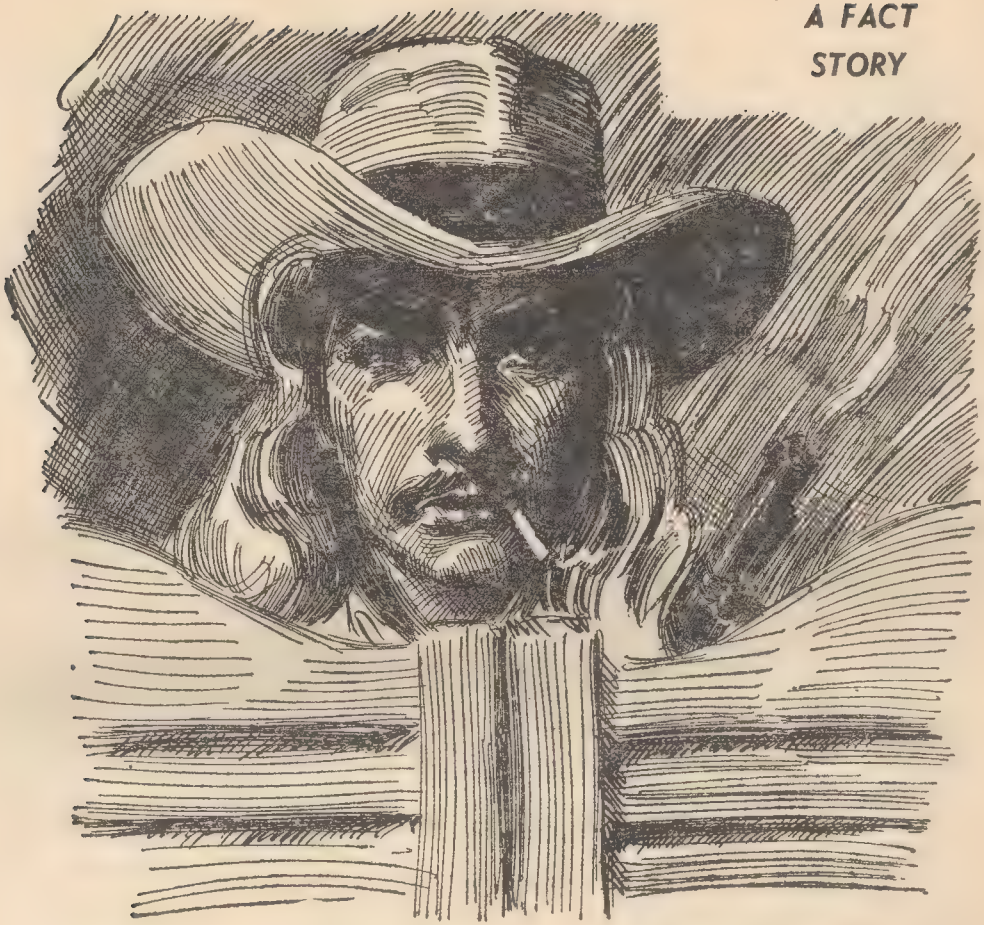
"You mean that he shot Diamond Jack?"

"You knew it all the time!"

"Of course. But *he* didn't kill him. Not really. I tried to tell him that last night. It was bound to happen. He couldn't leave the bottle alone, and he was getting worse and worse. It just happened to be Kelly's bad luck to have to pull the trigger . . . Do you think he'll ever come back?"

"I don't know." A grin found its way across Jug's bulldog face. "I guess he'd come back if I brought him back . . . It's not too hard making a man do what he really wants to do."

A FACT STORY



# THE GORGEOUS GUNMAN

By IRA L. NICKERSON

TELL that greenhorn sheriff," Andy Blevins said, "if he wants me, to come and get me . . . that is, if he ain't too busy combing that purty hair of his."

Hearing of the stinging ultimatum, Commodore Perry Owens abandoned his chore of rounding up jurors for the fall court term and spurred his horse towards town, his stately features as calm as if he were going to a dance instead of a gun duel with a savage, ruthless killer.

Holbrook, Arizona in 1887 was one of those lusty, untamed frontier towns that sprang into being wherever the railroad stretched its long steel arms into cattle country. The law of survival was the only one observed in the bustling cowtown until a group of citizens, wearying of the bloody brawls and thickening forest of white crosses on the local Boot Hill, decided it was high time Holbrook had a

ILLUSTRATED BY EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER

gun-toting peace officer. Especially since it had been made the new county seat.

Acting largely on the exuberant hunch of chairman Sam Brown, the committee had hired, sight unseen, a former Texas trail driver said to be nerveless under fire and a dead shot with both rifle and revolver.

Perhaps his name of "Commodore Perry" Owens had something to do with their choice, for the valor of the hero of Lake Erie was still fresh in the minds of Americans.

At any rate, Sam Brown's citizens committee decided Owens was their man.

Every man able to navigate filed out into the dusty street the day he arrived. Not even the committee members were prepared for the figure that met their eyes. Lillian Russell herself, riding into town on a giraffe, could scarcely have caused as much uproar as Commodore Perry Owens.

THE new sheriff sported a checkered tie knotted neatly at the throat with ends of equal length dangling on the front of his pearl gray shirt. Four-inch cuffs embellished smooth leather chaps that clung glovelike to his legs. Below these, fancy boots were visible that were a masterpiece of hand-tooled cowhide. He packed his long-barreled sixgun on the left side in the unheard of position of butt forward. When he spoke, his voice was as gentle as the late afternoon breeze blowing across the buttes.

But the thing that caused the most gasps was Owens' hair. It was the color of spun gold and gushed from below the broad brim of his sombrero like a yellow cataract to fall in soft, flowing strands far below his shoulders.

"Damn if he don't look more saint than sheriff," one townsman observed.

"That long-haired dude won't last two days!" another predicted contemptuously.

Now, scant hours after the pretty sheriff's arrival, Andy Blevins, seasoned killer and cattle thief, had issued a biting challenge. Some guessed the untried lawman wouldn't be alive at sundown.

That was why all of Holbrook watched with intent interest as Owens rode up to Brown and Kinder's stable and reined in his horse, his long blond tresses flashing in the sunlight. Stepping forward to meet him was Sam Brown, his lone booster in the little cowtown.

"Where's Blevins?" Sheriff Owens asked him from the saddle.

"He went in that little house across the tracks about a half-hour ago." Brown pointed. The little man eyed the other worriedly as he dismounted. "Him and his two brothers," he added.

Calmly, the Commodore withdrew a sheaf of papers from his saddlebag and thumbed through them until he found the one he wanted.

"What's that?"

The sheriff tucked the paper inside his shirt. "Warrant for the arrest of Andy Blevins, alias Andy Cooper," he declared quietly. Removing his sixgun, he spun the cylinder swiftly, then returned the Colt to its holster.

"Mose Roberts is there, too," Brown warned. "That makes four of them . . . And every one's a killer!" He followed the tall figure of the sheriff around to the other side of his horse. "How many deputies do you think you'll want?"

Commodore Owens, busy withdrawing his Winchester from its sheath on the saddle, apparently didn't hear him.

"I said, how many deputies do you want?"

Owens turned to face him, bent over his rifle. Satisfied that it was loaded, he looked up. "I reckon this'll be the only one I'll need," he drawled, his blue eyes hard.

It took a moment for Sam Brown to catch on. "You can't be figurin' on going over alone!" he exclaimed. "I tell you there's four of them! This is a job for a posse, son!" He laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"I've got jury calls to make . . . I haven't got all day." Pulling away from Brown's grip, Commodore Owens turned his back and headed towards the house across the tracks with long, easy strides.

Sam stared after him goggle-eyed. "I wouldn't have elected him if his record didn't show he had nerve. But four against one! And they're *under cover*!" His jaw sagged half-way to his gunbelt.

With a hoarse murmur, the grizzled townsmen of Holbrook moved together

in a united body behind Sam Brown.

Either Long Hair was the coolest gunman in the entire West, or its biggest fool. One thing was certain . . . he was no bluffer.

Their mutterings died as Sheriff Owens reached the tracks. Without slackening his stride he crossed the railroad right-of-way, walked up the pathway to the house and mounted the porch.

With hundreds of eyes fastened upon him, he halted before the door, his long tresses a mantle of gold in the late afternoon sun.

"Andy Blevins!" he called.

After a long pause, the door opened a slit and the outlaw peered out.

"Was you wantin' somethin'?" Andy grated.

"Yes. I want you."

"All right," Blevins replied slowly, "Here I come!" Suddenly, he shut the door.

For a stunned fraction of a second, the onlookers across the tracks held their breath . . . Then all hell broke loose.

Almost at the same instant the door slammed, a bullet came crashing through the panel. But the slug bit empty air. Owens had side-stepped swiftly. Firing from the hip, he shot back twice. Andy Blevins dropped to the floor inside.

A rifle cracked on the sheriff's flank. Leaping quickly around the side of the house, John, the eldest Blevins, had opened up.

Commodore Owens spun, ducked, and again fired from the hip. John Blevins crumpled to the ground with a bullet in his chest.

The sheriff moved nimbly into the yard. Mose Roberts leaped from a window, his Colt spitting flame.

Coolly, Owens snapped a shot at him as he was in mid-air. The Texan hit the ground dead.

Crazed for vengeance, Sam, youngest and last of the Blevins clan, burst from the house, .45 in hand.

The sheriff's hip-cradled Winchester belched fire for the last time. Sam pitched to the ground, the momentum of his headlong charge carrying him almost to Owens' feet.

The sudden stillness was almost painful to the eardrums.

SHERIFF OWENS stood poised for a moment, the smoke from his gun-barrel curling towards the sky as he surveyed the devastating effect of his shooting.

With three dead and one seriously wounded, the Blevins gang was wiped out . . . And all in scarcely a minute's time!

The men across the tracks were convinced they had witnessed a miracle. They stared awestruck at the long-haired sheriff as he returned from the bloodiest sixty seconds in the history of Arizona, and perhaps the whole West, with the same easy stride.

Shouldering his way among them, Commodore Owens remounted his horse and rode on about his duties, his face as expressionless as an Indian engaged in trading furs.

After that, the outlaw elements that had been pouring into Arizona gave Holbrook a wide berth. Few of them cared to tangle with the soft spoken man with hair of gold, heart of steel and vision of a hawk.

The Commodore went on to enjoy a long reign as sheriff and later as a U.S. marshal. One of the badmen whom he shot dead was Ike Clanton, famed survivor of the Tombstone gunbattle with Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday.

A good example of the respect men had for Owens is shown by the incident in which he had a confessed murderer in custody, awaiting trial.

The slain man had been one of the most popular citizens of Holbrook and his closest friends decided to speed justice with a little necktie party.

A mob of between thirty and forty angry men marched up to the jail and demanded the prisoner.

It looked like an ugly situation until Sheriff Owens came out. "Before you take him, you'll have to kill me," he told them quietly. "And there aren't enough of you."

Speedily, the mob melted away.

Perry Owens didn't affect his lengthy hairdo because of mere vanity.

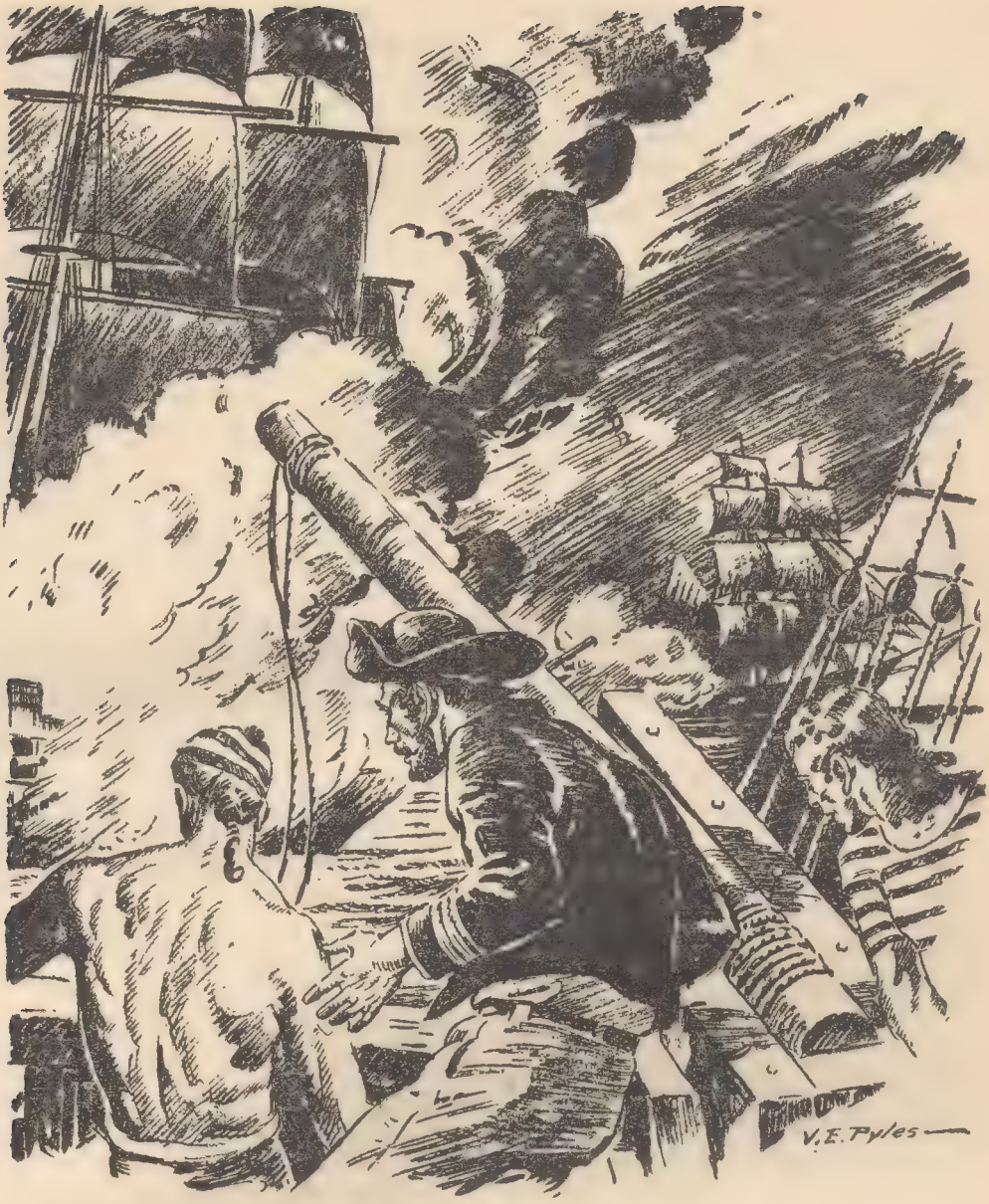
Before coming to Holbrook, he had worked as a horse-herder in wild, open

*(Continued on page 130)*

# THE CHOICE OF CAPTAIN ARCHER

*The night burst wide in a shower of flame, the Briton's canvas standing in bold relief.*

By JOHN PRESCOTT




THE west wind, sighing its damp breath upon the Lesser Antilles, blew with heat and monotony across Martinique and caused the schooner *Sarah,* of New London, to roll sullenly at her anchorage in a hidden leeward cove; her trim spruce spars describing dispirited arcs against the low scud overhead, her furled canvas appearing more gray than white in the heavy, moist air, and the perspiration of her master, Clyde Archer, falling *plop-plop* in running dimples upon the pages of the manifest in which he was writing at a small box upon the quarterdeck.

Presently this young man of generous and muscular proportions bestirred himself, knocked a shock of bronzed hair

ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

from his dripping forehead and tossed the quill pen on the box.

"That's it," he said. "That's it; and now let's leave this sweat and stench. We've enough kegged rum to wallow New York for a month and enough kegged tobacco to smudge the whole Atlantic seaboard."

"It's hogsheads, Clyde," Emmet Ball corrected. "Hogsheads is proper. We've a hundred hogsheads of each, and we're settled low."

"The lower we settle the higher the profit," Archer grinned. "We'll pick our weather and sail a wary course. And to hell with the British. Kegs it is, Emmet."

Archer looked at the old and crusty Emmet Ball, and what he saw appealed to him; the raffish yellow beard, tobacco stained in deeper streaks, threaded here and there with white, and comber of more winds on more seas than Archer had ever seen; gray eyes, vigorous and spry, accustomed for fifty years to running their judgment aloft in peace or war, and windows for a mind which had, as Emmet put it, "acquired a Continental education" in Mill Prison where he'd languished with Conyngham after depredations against the Channel trade.

"I like hogsheads," Emmet Ball maintained. "But you may have kegs," he allowed magnanimously, and leaning against the starboard rail, thrust his spade-like thumbs in the tops of his canvas trousers.

"Julius was at Marin again," he said. "He just returned; the Briton's still hove to. Got Birkhead's sloop strapped in the harbor like a fly in a bottle. The French told Birkhead there's no chance for a liner; seems Boney's got other use for 'em than prowling about his colonies."

"And that should be a lesson to young Lieutenant Birkhead, and the U.S. Navy as well," Archer said with scorn. "What possessed the man to get trapped like that . . . well, one man's loss is another man's gain. One brig less for us to worry about. The Navy's good for something after all."

Archer rose from the box and glanced appreciatively about the small, indented cove. A fine place for loading up in secret; a fine place for trading with the French, with the British ship but a scant few miles away over the neck of land, and less than ten around the southern tip of the island; a ship not likely to hunt them out with a naval craft to bay.

"Birkhead's in a bit of trouble other than that, it seems," Emmet Ball remarked. "He's got a piece of work of some importance and yonder brig is holding him from doing it. He's fair upset."

"A pity for his feelings," Archer said; he looked at Emmet. "I thought you had no sympathy for Madison's war, a good New Englander like you. I thought you'd fight only for free trade."

"No sympathy, just comment; and interest. I was in the Navy and it's hard to shake it from your mind. I was just thinking that Birkhead's young and in difficulties, and we're his countrymen."

"We've got two carronades and a bow and stern chaser. The brig's got fourteen guns. There's your answer."

"A diversion, perhaps . . . she's square-rigged; we're fore and aft. She could be out-pointed in a close reach . . . " Emmet paused and stared at the dense growth of fronds and plumes in the rich foliage on the shore. A strange bird walked on spindly legs in shallow water.

"Emmet," Archer said, and Emmet turned his head. "Emmet, we're loaded down and we're sailing at dusk. You pass the word, will you? And keep Julius away from Marin. I don't want any trouble at this hour. That brig's likely got marines."

EMMET stomped off in big sea boots, smarting, it seemed by the set of his shoulders, and Archer tried to put his mind from it; but it would not go. Birkhead was a fool. He was a fool to come into those waters in the first place, with the British running riot as they were, and a bigger fool for straying into Marin and getting trapped. He could thank his shallow draught for his ship, his life and those of his men. But it was stupid business.

Clyde Archer had no business down in there himself and he was well aware of that, but he had taken great pains to acquire a stout ship of high speed and clean lines, and to ascertain in advance that the market value of his cargo would be sufficient in the trade-stifled New England ports to make the risk worthwhile. There

had been great bitterness in the northern ports in 1812 and thereabouts, and a dedicated crew had not been hard to find. And Napoleon's relaxing of the Milan Decrees had made the venture just that much more attractive.

These things were in Archer's mind altogether as he made a thorough inspection of the loaded cargo and as he went about readying the *Sarah* for departure. They were in his mind, and then there was that other thing, the fleeting and pleasant image of a Mistress Bonnie Streator of New London, in whose interests he was largely conducting the voyage. The cargo receipts would buy a fine house for them to live in, a coach and four, and such respectability for himself that Mistress Streator's friends could never chide her for her choice.

"You musn't think of a thing like that," the light voice laughed. "I don't care a fig for them, nor for the wealth you seek. And I don't like your voyage. A woman's wishes are little enough in a man's world, but mine would rather have your sailing talents put to some good cause, 'Mister Madison's war' or no."

Ah well, a sweet young thing with golden hair like hers, lips like cherries and deep eyes bespeaking inner passions, was entitled to illusions the nature of which she could never understand. But the fine fat hull, unloading its copious stores on a New London wharf in the not too distant future would trim her canvas to another tack. Clyde Archer was sure he knew his women.

His tilted smile was reflective of the pleasures of his mind as he descended the ladder below-decks to give a last inspection to the stowage of the kegs; and it remained when he returned to the quarterdeck to gather up the manifest. But Emmet Ball's hirsute presence brought him back to Martinique.

"We're about to have a visitor," he said. "The young lieutenant's seen fit to pay his respects to us; at least that's what yonder flurry in the brush seems to indicate."

Archer mouthed, "Damn," explosively and snapped his eyes toward the darkening shoreline where, surely as Emmet had said, a small party was preparing to put out from the shallow water. There were four in the group and even at the distance, and in the dying light, Archer could quite easily discern the nationality of the men and the lack of spirit in their carriage.

"I thought I told you to keep Julius aboard," he said curtly.

"It's none of his doing," Emmet said. "Why, he's been here all the while. I think it's more in the way of a natural instinct. Birkhead doesn't have much choice, you know; unless he's got a mind to run the gauntlet."

Archer stared closely at Emmet Ball and swore again. Emmet's bearded face had a pleased expression and it was quite clear that he was not at all distressed. "This is your doing, Emmet; I can see it in that filthy beard of yours and I can smell it in the wind. What the devil did you hope to accomplish by getting him out here? You think I'm going to get us sunk while baiting the brig away from Marin?"

Emmet kept his eyes upon the slowly moving small boat and smiled with a slight lift of the corners of his beard. "Now, now, Clyde," he cooed. "I've had no traffic with the good lieutenant other than

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to dispatch Julius over there to keep an eye on things; at your orders, if you'll recall. Of course I offered the hope that . . . that official matters would not prevent him from enjoying a glass or two with us before we sailed. Common hospitality, you know. Compatriots alone in fairly hostile waters."

"Compatriots be damned," Archer scoffed. "Compatriots, yes, if you mean the same language and the same country; but compatriots, no, if you think I share his politics, his stupidity in supporting a war which has well nigh ruined the nation's shipping."

Emmet wagged his head and stroked his beard and smiled benignly upon the boat which was by now warping into the sleek topsides of the schooner *Sarah*.

"You'll not need to share those things with him; that's not what he's come for. Just share the wine." Emmet made for the ladder leading to the spar deck, and Archer raised from the box and bellowed after him.

"Then make it Canary," he called. "That Port's too good for the likes of him."

LIEUTENANT William Birkhead was a slender and young man who was badly rattled and upset and who had come upon an errand which was very humiliating and distasteful. Conversely, when Archer discovered this, he began to enjoy the meeting greatly. He went himself and brought the Canary to the quarterdeck where Emmet had seated the guests on chairs and kegs he had procured about the ship. He poured generous portions in all glasses and relaxed on the box to await the commencement of the proceedings.

Lieutenant Birkhead, during this primary shuffling, observed generously that the *Sarah* appeared to be a ship of fine construction and graceful rigging, and that she was handsomely crewed; then when he had exhausted the possibilities of that topic he placed his hands on his knees and spread his fingers wide.

"The *Ocelot* has fallen into a very bad position," he said in a tone of voice which could not conceal the bitterness he felt. "We took shelter in Marin during the storm last week and before we could clear the harbor that brig appeared and sealed us at anchor. Only the shallow water, which she cannot navigate, has saved us from capture or destruction."

"Yes, I have observed your situation," Archer said, and it was an effort to conceal a smile. "My man, Julius, has been in attendance upon your mishap. Regrettable; truly it is."

Lieutenant Birkhead looked up sharply from a study of the planking of the quarterdeck. His smooth, boyish face spread with color and he made as though to rise, and then relaxed again. Emmet gave a dark look to Archer and refilled Birkhead's glass.

"It may seen humorous to you," Birkhead said sulkily, "that a Navy ship should seek aid of you, but I assure you were the circumstances different it would never cross my mind."

Archer cleared his throat noisily and made an effort to appreciate the quandary of the *Ocelot*. "No, not humorous," he protested. "Merely curious. I believe the circumstances must be rare indeed. I don't know what I can do for you, but we're here to hear you out."

"We need a diversion," Birkhead said decisively. "We need a diversion of some sort to draw the brig away from her station. If it were done, say, in the early evening—within the next three hours—we could clear our anchorage and lose her under darkness."

Birkhead gazed at the splendid rigging of the *Sarah*. "The wind is west; you could close-reach with this, drawing her directly away from Marin. And if she took the bait we could clear the harbor."

It had been a difficult and painful thing to say and young Birkhead drank very deeply of the glass of Canary when he was done with it. Archer glowered and did not feel humorous any more.

"And what if I discover that I can't outrun her? What then? I've every bit of wealth I own in this ship and cargo."

He thrust from the box and strode between the circle of the chairs and taffrail. "What if I lose all that? What then? Who will pay me for my loss? The government?" He laughed. "And what of my men? What if they are wounded—that brig has twenty-fours if you will observe—or killed? Or captured? My mate has spent time in a British prison—

during the Rebellion—and while I'll grant you that was more than thirty years ago I doubt that much has since been done to make them hostelries of comfort."

"Oh, it wasn't so bad," Emmet intruded in an easy voice. "Fact is we drew an uncommon lot of local sentiment. Why, sometimes the people even brought us things to eat. They didn't favor George so much."

Archer turned on the old mate in anger. "You'd like something like this, wouldn't you?" he said curtly. "Or do you just think you would? There's been a change or two since you sailed with Conyngham. You never faced a carronade, did you? No, of course you didn't; you had sakers and minions, a long gun or two—four, eight, ten pounders. A twelve was a big gun then. Now look; look at the brig. Oh-ho, twenty-fours; and not just a handful, but two batteries of seven apiece. How long do you think the *Sarah'd* last? How long if the wind died or if the brig got us on her beam?"

He had not meant to let it get away with him, but it had and now Emmet Ball sat expressionless in his chair and the young lieutenant and his party were arising with brittle silence and hauteur.

"We're grateful for the wine," Birkhead said. "And now, if you'll pass the word along for our boat we'll be going back." The lieutenant was very formal in the face of his inexperience and disappointment. Archer stopped his pacing near the ring of chairs.

"Sit down, please. Sit down, that wasn't for your benefit. Besides, we don't know all about this yet; something brought you here, and if you want help from us I aim to know it."

"I'll grant you that," Birkhead replied, "but my mission has a measure of confidence . . . "

"You won't tell me what it is, but you do not hesitate to place my ship in danger," Archer interrupted. He looked at Emmet who was scowling. "There's only the two of us; you'll have to trust us."

Lieutenant Birkhead's expression revealed the struggle in his mind; he was a well-trained officer but his position was very bad.

"Very well," he said presently. "Very well. I've been sent to find a smuggler named Jean Lafitte."

"You're south for him," Archer said. "He's likely at Barataria . . . what do you want with him?"

Birkhead hesitated again, shrugged and then spoke openly. "A General Andrew Jackson's occupied New Orleans. The British have a plan afoot to seize Louisiana and the lower Mississippi. They've an army at Jamaica under Pakenham, and Lafitte, for reasons of his own, gave the General information in this regard. I've been sent now to get particulars; the General wants the sailing dates."

"But Barataria's not down here . . . "

"He left there; he was to sail for Havana and then Dominica. Since we came here I've learned from the French—how they got it I don't know—that he's gone to St. Martin."

"God, that's smack in the British stomach."

"But he's there, and I'm going to find him," Birkhead said doggedly. The lieutenant was perhaps a fool, but he was no coward.

Archer turned this over in his mind and spoke with deliberation. He was set in his mind about the matter, but Birkhead was likeable, and still a countryman.

"It's too great a risk to get your ship out as I see it now," he said carefully. "But I can take you, and such others of your crew as you see fit, to the nearest American port."

Emmet growled, "Clyde . . . "

"That's all I can do," Archer said with anger. "And even then if we're intercepted it's a high main yard, or prison at least, because you're military personnel and I've no letter of marque."

"I can't leave my ship," Birkhead maintained stiffly. "And I can't entrust the mission to any other."

Archer re-seated himself and folded his arms across his chest. He was adamant. "Well that's the best I can do; and that's a good deal."

"But not good enough . . . so, my thanks again for your courtesy; and now if I may have my boat?"

Without waiting for a reply Birkhead led his silent group across the quarterdeck and down the short ladder to the spar deck and thence to the rail. Emmet Ball trailed them slowly to the ladder and then turned on Archer. His yellow beard flared at the curl of his lips.

"Now that was a stroke of state," he jeered, "that you should be proud of for a good while to come."

Archer turned his goblet loosely in his hands and then cupped it to his mouth. "Emmet," he said, "it's dusk. I thought you were going to have our canvas set by then."

THE NIGHT was soft and the *Sarah* rode easily, though deeply, through the water which sometimes curled in phosphorescent bubbles about the cleaving of her martingale. The dampness in the air had been dried by a freshening wind and now the sky was swept of cloud and the tall spars stood clear and steady far above the deck, and the white sails lay clean and sharp against the black void and against the great stars which shone so bold and close in southern waters.

It was a fine night for sailing, but Clyde Archer could find no pleasure in it. He remained on deck while they cleared the cove and while the canvas was set, but then turned the care of the ship over to Emmet and descended the ladder testily to the gently undulating deck of his cabin, to be confronted there by the likeness of Mistress Bonnie Streator, which he kept upon his desk.

What craftsman had created that miniature, Bonnie Streator had never revealed to him, but Archer had always thought it the most compelling he had ever seen. Sometimes when he sat there with its intimacy it seemed that Bonnie had invested the tints and shading with her own spirit and was truly in the cabin with him. It was particularly so with the eyes, for it was in the nature of their creation to follow him about the narrow confines of his allotted space and somehow to register such tides of the spirit as he himself was feeling, and to hold out to him balm for his weariness, indignation for his anger, and sparkling laughter for his happiness.

But there were times as well when their meaning was obscured, or perhaps not wholly in accord with his state of mind. They would mock him sometimes, gazing at him archly, or perhaps admonish, or take him to task; and he could hear the faraway lilt of her voice, softly scolding or deriding him.

"Oh, Clyde, you were so cruel," they seemed to say to him at this moment. "Clyde, that young man is in desperate straits and because of it your country may be also."

"He got himself into it," he heard himself replying, and if he was at first shocked for speaking aloud in an empty cabin, that feeling passed and he found himself enjoying the rebuttal of her arguments. He stood with his feet wide-spread, hands clasping his hips, and his lips split in a grin of even teeth.

"He got himself into it; he's a young dolt."

"Perhaps, but we learn by experience. Perhaps he'd never sailed these waters before. Perhaps there was no one else to send; I think him rather brave for venturing on his mission without escort. It was truly a work for a larger ship—the *Constitution,* perhaps, or the *Hornet.*"

"That's exemplary of the folly of Madison and the Navy," Archer said aloud. "They're all dolts from Birkhead up, or Madison down, whatever way you look at it. None of it's my affair, and I'm glad of it."

"But it's your country, Clyde. It's young and unsure, and perhaps even as you say, inefficient, mistaken and wanting in many ways, but it will never be better if you work against it."

"And a fine thing for you to say, *that* is. A fine thing for a good New England woman. And what of this cargo I have aboard? What of this home of ours? Eh? What of that? And what of the ship I've dared to take through the blockade?" He began to gesture with his hands.

"There'll be more ships; another home if this one doesn't come to being. More opportunities for everything when the war is won; if it's won." Bonnie Streator's voice was very distinct in his mind. It was close and persistent and made the hackles of his neck rise. "I never wanted you for what you could give to me in that respect, and I've told you many times. I'd rather you fought the good fight . . . "

"Ho, like Porter, I suppose, when he got the *Essex* blown to bits at Valparaiso; or like young Birkhead, fighting his good fight in Marin harbor against the barnacles."

"Losh, Clyde, whoever are you talking to?" exclaimed a voice that was never that of Bonnie Streator. It boomed about

the bulkheads and the deck and Clyde swerved in his tracks and saw Emmet, standing wide-eyed and amazed at the bottom of the ladder, his beard a-quiver.

"What's in you, lad? The wine? Perhaps you should have served the Port up after all."

"What are you doing down here?" Archer growled, and then he slumped heavily in the desk chair and wiped his arm across his forehead. It was hard to come back. "Where do we stand? How's the course?"

Emmet Ball leaned on the desk and looked at him hard. "Maybe the fever's on you, lad. You've been in the sun a good deal, and it ain't like that of northern waters. You've been at it hard, Clyde . . ."

"Leave be," Archer said with weariness. "Where do we stand?"

"Why we stand off Martinique, some miles out from Trinite by now," Emmet Ball replied. He sat in another chair and drummed his thick fingers on the desk uneasily. "Should raise the Passage somewhat after dawn if the wind holds . . . d'you think young Birkhead will make a try for it?"

"What?" Archer said. "What? Make a try? Try for what?"

Mistress Streator's eyes were speculative now, and waiting.

"Why, to slide by the brig, that's what. We were the only outside chance he had, and he didn't seem the one to sit out the war on a beach. Seems to me he's got no choice but to bull it through; he was fair determined about gettin' to the smuggler."

"And he'll be torn to ribbons doing it," Archer said, "A gesture, taking that sloop against a brig of twenty-fours. Blood and tatters."

"Oh, it'll be bloody work for sure," Emmet Ball agreed. He leaned comfortably into the chair and his eyes became reflective. "I mind the time I put out from Dunkirk with Conyngham; the first time. We picked up the *Orange Packet* near mid-Channel, west of Dieppe. They didn't expect a thing, of course, and bein' British, much too proud to heed our warning gun. So we had to rake her . . . our solid shot was too light to bring down her sticks so we charged with grape and canister. Losh, such yelling there was; and the blood—the scuppers were awash with it . . ."

Archer wrenched himself from the chair and stared through the starboard port at the star-hung sky. He could hear Emmet rambling on and he could feel Emmet's eyes and the still speculative and waiting eyes of Mistress Bonnie Streator. And as Emmet's tale became more graphic he commenced to see the *Ocelot* sailing whitely through the sky with the hell of the British twenty-fours inundating her decks and yards.

"All right," he snapped, and Emmet stopped.

"What's that, Clyde?"

"All right," Archer repeated. "All right. What do you want me to do? You aren't set enough on this to think we can fight her, are you?" He glared at Emmet. "Two carronades and a brace of swivels against what the brig's got; we won't have the chance the *Ocelot* has."

"Well now," Emmet Ball commenced, and then he stopped and his smile spread his beard wide beyond his ears. "A fight would be better than baiting her, but I hadn't thought of it in just that way. I was thinking if we could cross her stern;

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steal up on her while she was busy with the *Ocelot*. Have you ever read Tacitus?"

"Who? Who the devil is Tacitus?"

"Oh, an old Roman; a chronicler, I think you'd call him. Or Pepys."

"I've heard of Pepys," Archer said carefully. "How does he fit with this? Historian, wasn't he?"

"Mmm-hmm; as were the others. But Tacitus was something of a military man. They were right smart in those days sometimes."

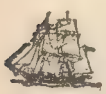
"Well?" Sometimes Emmet could be very obscure and indirect.

"Well, applying the principles that one related to the rum and to tobacco, and the forge on deck and the jury jib-boom we've got forward, I think we might rig a surprise for the British brig."

"Oh, you've thought this all out," Archer chaffed. "You've worked this out in your murky way and took your time about informing me."

"Oh, I thought you might see it right," Emmet Ball said grandly. "It was just a matter of time." Emmet smiled and gazed fondly at the portrait of Bonnie Streator. "I've never seen one quite like that before," he said. "The eyes, Clyde; the eyes that girl has. Almost a second conscience, don't you think?"

"What?" Archer said. "What?" His mind was not on Emmet's talk; it was struggling with Tacitus and the meaning of the tobacco and rum.



IT WAS three hours of sailing from Trinite before the *Sarah* rode the beam wind around Point d'Enfer and into the St. Lucia Channel. Every sheet was drawn taut and chocked down tight for the fast run, and the stem sang and the water boiled and vibrated along the strakes and beneath the counter, trailing phosphorescene far astern. But deep in the Channel she hove nearer shore and proceeded with stealth and care toward the harbor of Marin around the point. And Emmet Ball's preposterous preparations proceeded with increasing vigor.

Though he understood it now, Archer groaned and beat his fist upon the rail when he saw the fine, full tobacco hogsheads broken open, the bubbling, rich rum drained off and the set of storm sails shredded and sewed into canvas sacks; the hand forge blown to white-hot heat and the jury jib-boom drawn strained and creaking by the windlass against the rail; the strange, wide trough rigged upon the gaff jaws of the boom.

"Good Lord, Emmet," he said. "Don't ruin us. Save some if you can."

Emmet's beard was brittle with the gold of firelight and his face shone red and blustery around his snapping eyes.

"Better too much than too little, Clyde," he laughed. "It's this or nothing, and the brig won't give us time to correct our errors."

Emmet dropped another rum-soaked sack in the reeking pile upon the deck. "I think we're ready here . . . you'll have to be sharp about it once we're in; this fire'll mark us."

Archer nodded and went to the helm, sending the seaman forward to the spar deck. The *Sarah* had been weaving in short tacks through the Channel to obscure them from the harbor around the point of land, and now Archer spun the helm, called for tight sheets and sent the lithe craft scudding for the brig.

He could hear the bellowing of the Briton's guns before they cleared the point and he knew, as Emmet had surmised, Birkhead was making a run for it. The sound seemed rolling and ominous when heard through the muffling of the trees on shore, but when the *Sarah* entered the harbor mouth, rail down and bright spume flying, the red glare of the carronades danced in livid flares upon the water and the crashing of the detonations rocked the shoreline and the air was jellied with concussion. The brig's broad stern was facing toward them and her flanks were blasting at the creeping *Ocelot*.

When Emmet screamed, "At her, Clyde! At her!" Archer slammed the helm down and aimed the lance-like sprit at the Briton's counter. The darkness fled in the flaming light and the looming taffrail raised high and clear, the rudder chains, the rudder. Scattered musketry snapped sharp dots above them as the Briton became aware of them, and a hastily laid chaser tore a swath in the painted water far to port.

Then Archer put the helm down once again, crossing close beneath the Briton's stern, and Emmet's medieval siege engine, his mangonel, loosed its lashing and the

great boom swung the trough in a high, streaking arc and lobbed a hundred flaming rum-soaked sacks into the brig's rigging. The night burst wide in a shower of flame and comet's tails, the glaring canvas, standing in bold relief, exploded in conflagration and the resinous masts flared up like pine-knot torches. Figures, limned against the walls of fire, left the Briton's decks in panic; her guns trailed off sporadically to silence.

The *Ocelot* barked her starboard broadside in defiance and set her head for the open sea.

Later, Emmet dismantled his equipment and joined Archer at the helm. His beard was singed, his face was blackened and his eyes flicked in merriment. Archer took his eyes from the *Ocelot* which was fading ghost-like in the starlight.

"You think they're Christians now?" Emmet said. "I don't think they know what happened yet; they left their ship too fast."

"No, I don't suppose so," Archer answered. He was trying to find the *Ocelot* again, but it was gone from sight. He wondered vaguely about Birkhead and what he thought. "That was clever, Emmet, that catapult."

"Nothing new about it; been in use since Actium, and like as not a good while before that."

"Still clever . . . Do you think he'll find him? Lafitte?"

"Find Lafitte? I think so . . . I think he'll find him. He's got a grip on things. It may take time—a plodder; but he'll do it."

"What do you think will happen at New Orleans?" Archer asked. New Orleans had become important to him now. It was hard to understand.

"I think something big is going to happen there," Emmet said slowly. "It would be a thing to see."

"Perhaps we'd better go," Archer said. "What's left of the cargo will keep. It's better aged anyway."

Emmet did not say anything, but he was smiling broadly and humming a tune through his beard. Archer gave him the helm. "Pick your course and hold it, Emmet; I'm going down below."

"Below? On a night like this?"

"I'll be back. I'm just going to check . . . check some papers."

"Ah, the eyes," and Emmet laughed. "The eyes, and I nearly forgot. Oh-ho, those beautiful eyes. But you needn't take the trouble, Clyde. I'm sure they're smiling. Aye, that they are."

# KILLER TIGER

*A FACT STORY*

THE man-eater tiger had attacked the native settlement of the rubber-workers in the dead of night. His roaring, slashing rending visitation had been swift and terrible. Three Malay latex-carriers had met sudden death with their spinal columns bitten through at the neck or their skulls crushed; a riding horse had been disemboweled in a nearby stable, and at least four natives had been clawed seriously. In his crazed onslaught and subsequent flight, the human-hating tiger had torn down one whole side of the heavy thatched wall. He had been seen leaping the fence near the rubber-coagulating sheds, and, until the heavy jungle scrub-brush concealed him, his incredibly fast flight was like the startling flash of lightning against the deep, impenetrable shades of night.

I hurried on from Kuala, on the west coast of Upper Malaya, to meet my rubber-planter friend, Jack Crowden, in Kelan—bringing along my guns, a .275, a 450/400 and, my pet, a fine Winchester. I had hunted last with Jack in the wilds of Assam, close to the rise of India's Himalayas, and some years before that we had

By WILMON MENARD

# OF KELAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
DANIEL PIERCE

*Stealthily the man-eater came from cover, watching the progress of the Malay girl toward the village.*

joined a safari in the Kenya country of west Africa on the trail of lions. When I arrived in Kelan, a small inland hill-station, he came running out of the shade of the warehouse and pumped my hand hard. "You and I have a job this time, all right!" he cried. "While you were on your way up, the man-eater got a native worker of mine in broad daylight at the end of the *kampong* (compound) street." His rugged, mahogany-hued face showed evidences of sleepless, anxious nights. "He's got to be nailed or within a few days there won't be a single native worker in the fields."

"What makes you so sure it's a 'he'?" I asked.

"I've seen the pug-marks (footprints) at one of its kills," Jack replied. "Besides, I know the history of this one. Several years ago, this tiger was caught in a trap set by some natives in the jungle far to the north of here. A small sultan of one of the districts, with more money than sense, bought the cub for his youngest son. When it was three years old it suddenly, one day, turned on the sultan's son and mauled him quite badly. In fact, he lost three of his fingers. The tiger was driven back into the cage, and the next day the sultan had some native hunters take the beast outside the grounds to kill it. But they must have been scared or very bad shots, because they only succeeded in hitting the tiger in the shoulder, and before they could reload their haywire blunderbusses the devil, spouting blood, was in the tall *kunai* grass, hightailing it for the jungle. Trackers and beaters, with hunters, were sent out, but the tiger stayed undercover, licking his wound. Four months later he started his rampage of human killings. With the four natives he's killed in the Kelan district, his total to date is sixty-three."

It was apparent that this particular tiger had declared an all-out war on humans. Sometimes a Malay native is gripped with the lust to kill, but he doesn't progress very far along that homicidal route, because the symptoms are familiar, and he's customarily cut down before he can use his *kris* to an alarming degree. But here we had a tiger running *amok*, a beast at home in the jungle, who, in addition, had an astounding insight into the thoughts and habits of its human quarry.

Words are inadequate to describe the abject terror that grips the inhabitants of a village or workers on a plantation when the blood-chilling hunger-roar of a man-eater shatters previous complacency. Suddenly, villages become ghost-settlements, deserted in panic by the terrified natives, and rubber-workers huddle with chattering teeth and fear-glazed eyes behind closed doors, refusing to budge and go to work in the rubber forests or processing-sheds, struck by a paralyzing bolt of fright that renders mind, flesh and limb incapable of the slightest movement. And such fear is not to be lightly dismissed. The natives, who have known the ways of the jungles and its beasts since childhood, realize that a man-eating tiger is the worst killer in the world!

There are very definite reasons why tigers become man-eaters. The commonest is old age, during which period the tiger or tigress is unable to catch its natural quarry, the fleet-footed animals of the jungles; the other cause can be attributed to an early crippling or wounding of a tiger by a careless bullet or a losing battle with a leopard, jungle bear, or cobra, which nullifies him or her physically for the fast and hard survival-code of the jungle, in which quickness and power play so great a part. A human then becomes its easiest prey, and once a tiger has crushed a man's or woman's skull in its massive jaws, or bitten through a spinal column, it is sure to repeat the performance. A tiger is not born a man-eater, so cubs will not continue the hellish slaughter its mother or father follows, unless on some occasion it actually joins in the killing. Usually the tigress or tiger makes the kill and calls the cubs for the meal. Normally, a tiger approached by a human down-wind will flee. But not a man-eater. Certainly, there is no more diabolical stalker and exterminator of *homo-sapiens* than a tiger, once old age or infirmity makes him prey deliberately upon mankind.

THREE hours later, with porters and native trackers, we had crossed the yellow, crocodile-infested river and plunged into the flaming green of the

dense foliage bordering it. Three of the trackers patrolled far in advance, while four others protected our right and left flank. Not only did we have to maintain vigilance for the possible back-tracking of this man-eater, but there were other menaces of the jungles, such as cobras, bears, wild boars and leopards, who accidentally accosted or cornered, might be mean customers.

The primeval jungle that we had invaded seemingly grew out of the swampy low-lands bordering our route. Vigorous trees supported leaning, dying trees draped with parasitic creepers that slowly sucked out their life and would soon send them crumbling to the ground to form the death-decay out of which flora would be reborn again and again. These huge trees rose like shrouded skeletons above the steaming tropical forest, and now and then on their naked branches were the silhouettes of birds of prey, the Malayan vultures, their repulsive heads and beady eyes inclined downwards, peering for limping, expiring prey, like silent watchers of inevitable death in lofty, eternal contemplation. Troops of scolding spider-monkeys swarmed endlessly along bridges of branches to adjoining trees, and horn-bills cut across our way with heavy wing-beats in the wake of green parakeets and fruit pigeons. Now and then we would glimpse some porcupines, Malayan tapirs, raffalii squirrels, Malayan honey bears and Malayan gaur, all who took instant flight upon our approach. The sodden earth and flora beneath the merciless rays of the sun gave off steam-mists, as if smoldering with nether fires. We seemed like Lilliputian people moving through a fantastic world of crushing greenness.

We made a halt that night in a small native *kampong* in a jungle clearing, and, fully aware of the proximity of the many ruthless killer-animals at large, I slept fitfully. Through the portentous darkness came the sounds of a faraway snarl of a foraging beast, the nervous trumpeting of elephants, the whimpering of monkeys, and the resounding splashes now and then made, I imagined, by the scaly body of a crocodile sliding into the river.

When we arose the next morning, a Malay tracker reported that word had been brought in from the jungle-land near Sikit that huge pug-marks of the tiger had been found in the damp earth near a water-hole, and later an old native wood-chopper was discovered in a section of the mahogany forest mauled and frightfully clawed. His dying words gave added proof of the killer-tiger roaming that vicinity. While we were preparing for our imminent departure, a dilapidated car drove in from Sesang. The wild-eyed Malay driver had a startling story to relate of his experience with the man-eater while driving at night along the narrow road at the edge of the jungle. Rounding a turn, his headlights had picked up the huge head of the killer, momentarily blinding it. Then a dark shadow hurtled through the darkness and there was the crushing impact of a heavy body landing on the top of the car, followed by the screeching sounds of claws raking the metal roof. In his extreme panic the driver had pressed down hard on the accelerator, the front wheels struck a deep fissure in the rain-rutted road with a jarring shock, and the tiger was thrown clear. The defective engine had backfired a few times, with a report like rifle-fire, and the man-

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eater streaked off into the jungle. Jack and I examined the deep scratches in the metal of the hood and top. It was as if giant steel hooks or grapnels had snagged the car-top, furrowing deep grooves in its surface. It made me shudder to think what this killer's fangs and claws could do to human flesh and bone.

We pressed forward at a faster pace. Two hours on the trail we were met by a group of excited natives who told us that the tiger had struck again, this time killing a mother and her child close to a bathing-stream.

On and on we plodded through the jungle, sometimes skirting endless stretches of the river-bank, against which the river lapped with slumbrous monotonous whispers, and in the center of the stream crocodiles crawled across the mud-flats and sank into the swirling brown water with hardly a ripple to mark their entrance. Now we floundered through deep swamps, wading waist-deep across the polluted, scummy section, or tight-roped along logs felled across elephant-holes. There was always the burning sun penetrating our flesh like fiery arrows; the endless toil of dreary hauling of equipment through the matted underbrush; the drenching sweat that bathed our bodies and trickled blindingly into our eyes; the leeches plastering themselves to bare arms to suck the blood; the tense expectancy of hearing the sudden charging-roar of the man-eater. The jungle trees and the scrub-brush lay uncommonly still under the blinding sun. The leaves hung motionless; not a breath of air stirred. Everything seemed ominously unreal. For security measures, Jack instituted an occasional veering from our course, tacking sharply first right and then left. A killer-animal of the jungle approaches its prey up-wind, or lies in wait down-wind. We did not care to stumble into an ambush, or be stalked from the rear.

We reached the first native *kampong* outside Sikit in the late afternoon. There we were greeted by the headman of the village, the sub-chiefs and the villagers who set up a loud hubbub upon our approach. We were met with the distressing news that the man-eater had struck again, barely an hour before our arrival. The headman took us to a small hut in the *kampong* where a man huddled in the corner weeping bitterly. He recovered his composure long enough to tell us that it was his wife who had fallen prey to the killer-tiger, scarcely a stone's throw from the village fence, as she moved down to the stream with a bundle of laundry.

"We have heard of your mission here," said the village leader, as he led us toward the stream, "so we have left everything exactly as we found it—even the body has not been moved."

Mere words cannot describe the horrible death the small, slender woman had met. She had been seized, apparently from behind, one side of her face and skull had been torn away, and then the man-eater's claws had raked her back from neck to buttocks, exposing the gleaming white ridges of the spinal column. He had eaten less than two pounds of flesh from the thighs. Jack bent down to examine the ravaged section of the body, and then rose white-faced and gave me a significant look.

"The teeth marks in the flesh show that one of this man-eater's fangs is broken, which is another reason why he's a killer of humans." Why the man-eater had not carried the body off was a mystery, as a killer-tiger usually does lug off its kill. Jack ventured an opinion: "This tiger is glutted, and he kills humans purely for savage satisfaction." We followed for a short distance the man-eater's pug-marks along the trail and then parallel to the stream. The pug-marks were deeply embedded in the soft ground, attesting to the weight and length of the tiger. Jack, an authority on tigers, placed his size at over nine feet, by merely measuring with his eye the distance between footprints. The right foreprint showed a lighter mark in the ground, which cinched the identity. "The sultan's tiger was shot in the right shoulder, and this shows that he has a pronounced limp in the right leg." Also, the imprint of the pads of the forefeet revealed deep rutting, with the claws slightly splayed, indicating the age of the killer.

The villagers, our inspection completed, gathered up the pitiful remains of the woman and carried her in a sheet back to the *kampong*. Our faces were grim as we trailed behind them. We were in solid agreement that the tiger had to be dispatched as quickly as possible.

IN THE late afternoon we had finished constructing a *machan* of rope and rattan in a high tree, thirty feet up its trunk amongst the concealment of its heavy limbs and leaves. Two formidable bamboo, with lashed cross-pieces, served as a means of ascent to this not-too-comfortable roost, which overhung the bank of the stream and the clearing.

That first night a young goat was tethered at the edge of the stream, as a lure for our man-eater. Only once did the frightened animal show signs that the man-eater was near. He gave a sudden bleat of terror and jerked violently at the rope confining him to the tree, but nothing happened, and at last the trembling goat quieted down for the rest of the night. I am sure that the tiger had come close, seen the snubbed goat, and had gone off contemptuously. The second night we staked out a young water-buffalo in the same spot, but nothing happened. Again the third and fourth night we kept our tense vigil. Still no sudden emergence from the jungle, no slinking silhouette of rending death.

On the morning of the fifth day, while the natives were leading the nervous buffalo back to the *kampong,* Jack said irritably, "We're wasting our time watching over animal decoys. Now, if a human was tied out there, we'd get some quick action."

"Why don't we take turns taking a stroll up and down the stream tonight, while one remains on the *machan* covering the other?" I asked quietly.

He gave me a sharp glance. "It's a risky plan," he replied, "but it's the only way to draw him out for a shot."

During our stay at the *kampong* the man-eater had attacked no humans, which was added proof that he was near—and waiting.

That evening I took the first walk along the stream for a fifteen minute duration, and I recall my quaking fear as I stepped stiffly and nervously along the cleared area at the edge of the rustling stream that wound a silvery course into the ominous darkness of the jungle's edge. I puffed fitfully on my cigarette and disturbing thoughts chased one another through my mind. What if Jack fell asleep during one of my strolls? What if the tiger got behind me and struck before Jack saw it or I could cry out? What if it came to a race between me and the tiger and I stumbled at the foot of the ladder and Jack didn't get a good shot? We had a small portable searchlight, run by a battery, rigged up to the *machan,* but what if this didn't function at the crucial second? These were the sensations of incertitude and fear that gripped me as I walked mechanically through the night. And I knew Jack would have similar thoughts when his turn came.

But at last I was back on the *machan* again, adjusting the mosquito-net hood over my sun-helmet and stuffing my hands into cotton-gloves soaked in oil-of-citronella. A few mouthfuls of crackers to be washed down with lukewarm water from the canteen, then the fixed staring at the jungle's edge, the winding stream, and the pale, phantom-like figure of Jack patrolling the bank, inviting the man-eater to betray its presence.

This went on for about three shifts. At last Jack abandoned this strategy, and I was disappointed. "He's out there!" Jack muttered, as he climbed up to my side on the *machan.* "I can feel it in my bones he's close, and that he knows we're up here, sneering at us, determined to wear us out with this tomfoolery, so we'll become careless and over-confident. Sometimes while I was pacing out there I could almost feel his stinking breath whistling down my neck." He gripped the railing hard. "Come out, you murderer, come out and show yourself—*just once!*" he whispered furiously.

The curtains of the jungle seemed to be closing in upon us, and toward the stream it seemed as if a sea-wave of blackness rolled up from there to envelop the small native compound, stockade and the succession of thatched huts with their steep *attap* roofs. The pyramids of thatched huts were touched now by the night-breezes, and the dried palm-leaves lifted and rustled. These slightest new sounds, the barest movement of a shadow, made us stiffen and lift our rifles vigilantly.

AT LAST the late moon rose and cast an ethereal radiance over the stream and the *kampong* and the jungle. It was a moon such as one rarely glimpses,

except in the soft moist air of tropical countries. The crescent was irradiantly outlined by a gossamer, phosphorescent edge, yet the entire face could be seen with a wonderful clarity, giving the impression that it was illumined from behind, so that it did not appear to be a simple lunar disc, but a glowing ball suspended in transparent emptiness.

From the native compound came the sound of music—Malayan flutes and stringed instruments wailing forth thin, melancholy sounds. Sometimes it was but a single bar, a musical lamentation that keened to a pitch and then fell. Tom-toms resounded with rhythmic strikes, like the distant toll of a bell-buoy at sea. It was the dirge for the native woman slaughtered by the man-eater.

"Poor devils," mused Jack. "If it isn't black-water fever, malaria, cobras, or one of their own running *amok*, it's a man-eater tiger on the rampage."

Shortly thereafter the *kampong* fell silent, as the villagers went to their sleeping-mats and hammocks. We stared down into the moonlit setting with troubled eyes, feeling suddenly desolated by the cessation of human sounds. Now there were only the mysterious Malayan jungle, the night stirrings and the monotonous swirling sounds of the stream.

An hour or more passed, and I must have dozed off, because suddenly I was brought back to reality with Jack shaking me and speaking urgently into my ear. *"Quick, look there!"*

I peered impotently in the direction he was pointing, but sleep was still moving sluggishly through my consciousness, so at first I could only see the trunks of the trees, the low brush and the motionless facade of tall grass that grew beyond the stream.

Then, abruptly, like the moving of the card-framed slide of a stereoscope into focus, my eyes brought the section of the bank he indicated into sharp vision. I saw *something* move! So slight was the agitation of the lofty grass that I thought I was mistaken. Was it just an illusion of physical and mental exhaustion, a figment of the imagination?

"He's here!" Jack spoke close to my ear in a low vibrant whisper. Then I heard him catch his breath sharply. Directly below us a native girl was walking towards us in the moonlight along the bank of the stream on her way back to the *kampong*. Possibly she had kept a romantic rendezvous with a youth farther down the stream. She was comely and svelte and I remember the sheen of the moonlight on her midnight-black waist-length hair; her skin revealed above and below her *baju*-covered breasts seemed to glow amber. She walked gracefully, innocent of lurking death. "And that's who he's been stalking."

I was just about to shout down warningly to the night-wandering native girl when Jack clamped a firm hand over my mouth.

"It's our only chance!" he hissed. "Don't spoil it!"

I realized the sense of his warning. If we missed our chance at the tiger this time, he might leave this vicinity and escape into another section of Upper Malaya where he would continue his slaughtering of humans. We had to gamble one life for perhaps a hundred others. Man-eaters in their period of slaughter had been known to run up a toll of human casualties over four hundred and ten.

I turned my head and stared fixedly at the spot where I had seen the grass move. Now quite clearly I saw the long, moving shape emerging from its concealment, close to the ground. A shell already was in the breech of our rifles, for which I was thankful. The sound of the injecting of a bullet then into the chamber would have scared off the killer-tiger. I heard Jack breathing hard, and I could feel an artery throbbing in my neck, so hard were my teeth clamped together.

STEALTHILY the man-eater came from cover, watching the progress toward the village of the Malay girl, who at this point was still oblivious of imminent danger. In the moonlight the tiger seemed like a sculptured piece of bronze, and, as if viewed through a great magnifying glass, I could now see every detail of the massive head, the blazing eyes, the powerful muscles rippling under the satiny tawny coat with its black well-defined stripes, the stiffened tail that moved ever so slightly. The killer's approach quick-

ened imperceptibly like the forward surge of inevitable doom, and the grace of its movements was unreal, as if his paws never once touched the ground. He was the very incarnation of that delirium of animal madness, the absorption of the slaughter by which the tiger beyond all other killer-beasts of the jungles is obsessed.

Suddenly, as if sensing her stalker, the Malay girl turned and saw the man-eater; her body stiffened in fright, a piercing shriek filled the night and she started to run wildly up the *kampong*-trail. And at this split-second the tiger charged, roaring his blood-chilling attack. I had never been so close to such a large tiger in the jungle to see so clearly the formidable head, the inhuman eyes, the sinuous power of limbs and body. Its coat in the moonlight seemed to be made of ineffable radiance.

The awful tumult of its roar had hardly died away before our rifles spoke. As if in a dream, I saw the tiger somersault into the air, strike the ground heavily and then rend earth and bush with fang and claw. But he rose quickly and streaked low after the screaming girl. We fired again, almost together. This time the tiger was stopped in mid-strike, as if struck by a bolt of lightning, and his body shuddered as a steam-launch trembles through all its length when brought to a standstill by a collision with a hidden rock. The terrifying head snapped back and he gave a scream of rage that seemed to sustain itself limitlessly across the moonlit jungle-land; then he shot straight up into the air for his full length, and landed heavily on the ground almost at the foot of our tree. Thirty feet away, the Malay girl had fallen forward in a dead faint.

Again and again we fired down into the reddish, quivering shape, until it rolled over on its side, legs pawing spasmodically.

We climbed down the bamboo ladder and cautiously approached the man-eater. Behind us we heard the natives rushing from the *kampong*. After a wary inspection, we were convinced that the killer was dead, struck vitally by at least six slugs.

Without any dramatics we shook hands across its great body. It was the largest tiger either of us had ever seen. From peg to peg it measured eight feet eight inches, and over curves it would be nine feet four inches.

I bent down closer. Fixed upon the face was still the expression of homicidal animal hatred and rage, born of overwhelming jungle dementia turned against humans.

The lips were still drawn back, exposing the yellow, murderous, damaged fangs, which in the last seconds had bitten deeply into the blood-flecked lower lips; the cords in the neck stood out like steel cables, and in the wide staring eyes there was still a light of fierce madness—the frenzied mania of the killer-beast.

The nervous tension was released and weariness swept swiftly through every sinew, joint and muscle of my body. Jack's face looked haggard and white in the moonlight. We were oblivious to the shouting, jubilant natives who milled around us, prodding the slain tiger with sticks and knives. We walked slowly, silently back to the *kampong*, unmindful of the skin of the man-eater being ruined. The killer was dead. That was all that mattered.

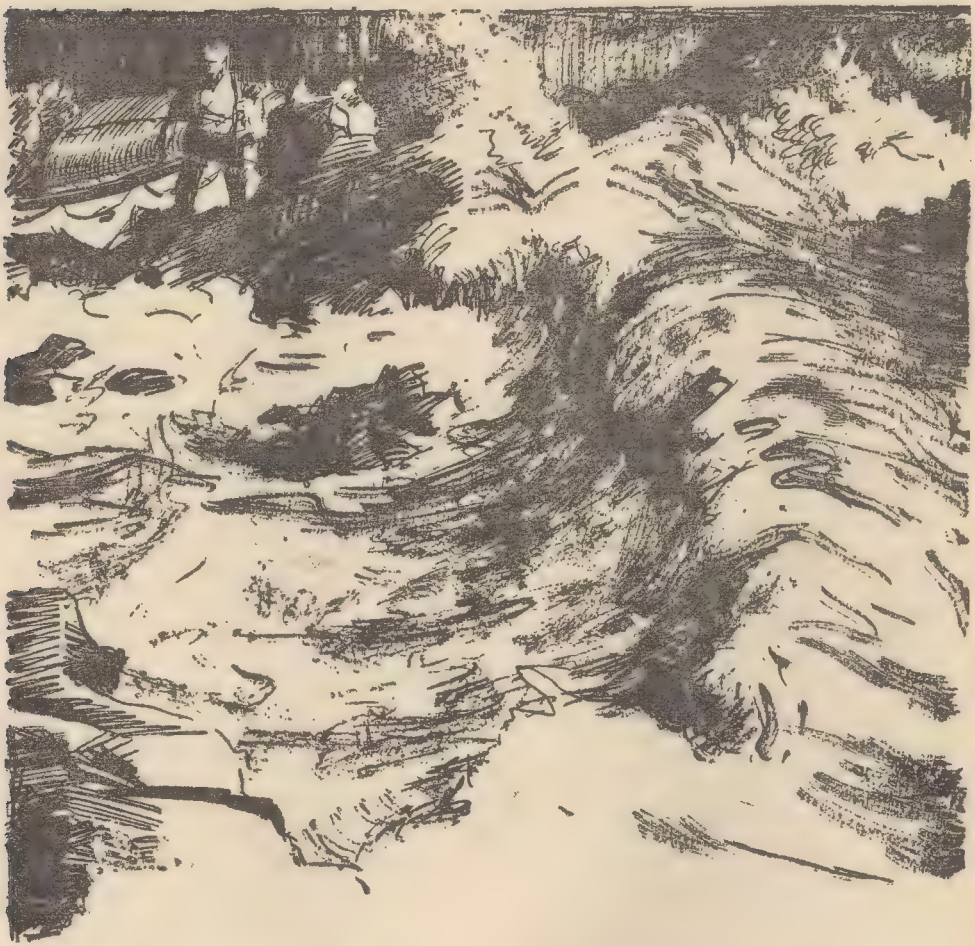
# THE TROUBLE

*Jensen had a choice—he could save himself, or he could catch the dog.*

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

# WITH JENSEN, A. B.

## By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS



IT STARTED at the head of the gangway during a squall in Brooklyn and wound up on top of a granite cliff in Cornwall. All the way I was right in there with eyes and ears rigged out on boat booms.

You've got to watch *something* when you're at sea in a cargo ship. After you've observed the first ten million waves you begin watching people.

Waves haven't much personality. Well, some maybe. Big gray, froth-crested combers like we got that run, waves with the nudge of a falling mountain back of them. But don't watch those babies. You find yourself climbing signal halyards and though a third mate is lower than a bow-legged cockroach he gets conspicuous awful fast when scared. No, it's people you want to watch—people like Jensen and the mate.

Over at her Brooklyn pier a squall out of the west hit the *Louisa Lane* just after sundown. She started to surge at her moorings. The gangway showed signs of carrying away and rain slashed across

the deck. Night came down like somebody'd put you in his pocket. All hands scrambled.

Mr. Ivor, the mate, was heading back to the ship in the shoregoing blue serge suit he's had for twenty years. To hear him it's still increasing in value. It shines like diamonds already. Anyhow, Mr. Ivor hates to get it wet and he came up the plank making knots. His small nut, wrinkled by worry and weather, was tucked down tight. With scrawny shoulders hunched, bag dangling, he moved.

Up at the top here was Paul Jensen, a square-built first-voyage A.B. in the *Louisa,* securing the gangway with a couple of other hands. Mr. Ivor went across the taut line in Jensen's mitts like it was the finish of the Irish Sweep. Only he hit it with his ankle instead of his chest. And besides, he was no horse. For the next half second he was a bird and he made one bird of a landing on the steel deck. Ker—whango! And then patter! patter! patter! as the stuff in the bust-open bag came down and the rain went to work on it.

The two A.B.s with Paul Jensen faded away in the dark like pie on a mess table.

"WHO did that?" Mr. Ivor barked when he peeled himself off the deck. It was just reflex action; as an experienced officer he knew he'd just be talking to a sudden vacuum. "Who did that?"

"I did," said young Paul Jensen and he never straightened up from his lashing job.

Mr. Ivor staggered and his lean fist curled up. But he was a chief officer more than he was a human being.

"B'lay that and follow me!" he snapped and jumped over his scattered shore gear to lead the way to the stern lines. Jensen followed the blue serge like a lamb.

They got all secured by the time the squall played out. Then the mate looked him over. Though the mate was only about a three-quarter size seaman he threw an eye like a steel marlin spike.

Jensen was deadpan, as if he could spill a chief mate on his schnoz any time and not get excited about it. His face was broad, to match his shoulders, and it was calm and smooth from one big ear to the other.

Mr. Ivor whipped out his five-cent brown reminder notebook like a sheath knife.

"What's your name?"

"Paul Jensen, sir." No apology.

Mr. Ivor was no hand at bellowing threats. He wrote down Jensen's name, digging in the pencil real venomous, and went back to his sodden gear. He was wrinkling and twisting his thin brown nose as if he was practicing to be an elephant. Once he stopped to look back and tap the edge of the notebook on his buck teeth. Tap-tappy-tap-tap—Tap-Tap! It didn't seem to do him any good.

Neither did talking. But he tried it. The mate was no strong, silent man.

"I think that Jensen is a trouble-maker, Mr. Sundstrom," he said to the second mate.

Sundstrom curled an eyebrow.

"He's trying to undermine my authority," Mr. Ivor said. "He didn't bother to run after tripping me."

"Hasn't made any trouble while you've been ashore," said Sundstrom.

"No?" Mr. Ivor was interested. "He hasn't? No trouble?" He canted his head to consider the matter. "He could ha' tripped me by accident—but he didn't scram. Defiant. H'm!"

The worry wrinkles deepened as if somebody was carving them in with a knife.

"I like to figure my men, Mr. Sundstrom," he said. He looked at me. "You should know what a man hangs on by—you'd say what makes 'em tick, Alcott."

I grunted softly, to indicate moderately respectful boredom, about the right emotion for a self-respecting third mate.

He got out his notebook and pecked at the rail with it.

"What a man hangs on by," he repeated, giving his mug another twist. "The thing he puts his back against. It can be his reputation for toughness, love of a woman, curiosity, satisfaction in doing a job, throwing his weight around, money, sheer stupidity—"

He stopped and looked down the bay.

"Something that keeps him hanging on in the toughest spots," he muttered. "And if you know what trait it is, you know the man and what he can put out for the ship. You must know."

I glanced at the square-built A.B.

shifting a hatch cover under the harsh brilliance of a flood light. When he bunched up his muscles, things moved.

"I'll put two dollars on sheer stupidity, sir, without trimmings," I said.

Mr. Ivor shook his head. "It isn't as simple as that," he muttered.

Sundstrom and I had heard it all before. We'd seen Mr. Ivor go snooping and fuming around like a private eye in a movie, just trying to find out what was important to some new ropechoker who had all the intricacies of character of a backyard carrot, a guy who'd signed on to eat and would sign off to spend it.

Being psychologically minded myself I had doped it out that Mr. Ivor's twist was one of those hangovers from the war, like never lacing your shoes or sleeping in your pants. Presumably there'd been spots when it was handy for him to know certainly which man would have to be slugged fast to cut off a catfit that might start a panic. But the thing had gotten beyond bounds with Ivor. These days you don't psychoanalyze seamen; you just look 'em over for a reasonable number of arms and legs.

Mr. Ivor's wishywashy blue eyes suddenly gleamed.

Suds, the ship's quivery little white terrier, had come up to Paul Jensen to have a smell at his pantsleg and another at the hatch cover. Suds got around almost as much as the mate.

Jensen fended off the pooch in time to keep him from being flattened by the heavy cover and then went on with his job.

"There, you see, he's not too fond of dogs," the mate said.

"Significant, sir," I said. "But significant of what?"

Ivor didn't get it at all. "As you say, Alcott, significant of what?" he muttered. "An indifference to third mates, perhaps?"

He looked at the windy sky and then went off to see that a messman who was picking up his gear didn't get too fond of it.

I made a note to find out myself what sort of guy Jensen was down under. A third officer has to do something between watches. But there was lots of time. I'd let the mate observe a while first.

THAT squall, the end of a late fall heat wave, was just the start of what was handed to us. We took a pasting from a northwester as soon as the old wagon stuck her nose out past Ambrose. All hands squawked as if they'd expected zephyrs but it was the season of the year for pastings. Mr. Ivor trotted around even faster than usual, buttoning her up carefully for some rough going and risking the loss to leeward of a few frostbitten ears among the men on deck. Suds started following him around under the impression he was going some place. He always hoped, Suds did, but he never got further away than the anchor windlass on the steering engine house in a small steel world.

The next jolt Mr. Ivor got out of Jensen was when he headed for the foredeck to correct some sloppy work done by Green, the bosun, on securing Number 1 and 2 hatches for a winter passage.

He found Jensen growling in his throat and leading the deck gang. He had tapped out the wedges and had the bunch stretching the tarps smooth while Green stood by making sullen cracks.


# Shocking Facts about PIN-WORMS

You may think that Pin-Worm infection is rare and strikes only "careless" families —that, therefore, your children are safe.

Don't you believe it! Medical experts report that at least *one out of every three persons* examined, adults and children alike, was a victim of Pin-Worms. And this embarrassing, annoying condition can spread through entire families.

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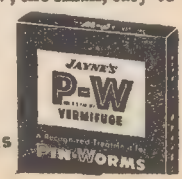
So watch for the warning signs, especially the tormenting rectal itch. Then ask your druggist for **P-W**, the small, easy-to-take tablets that act in a special way to bring real relief from Pin-Worms.




**Just Remember: P-W® for Pin-Worms**

"He thinks he's the bosun, sir," Green said, jerking a thumb.

"You the bosun?" the mate asked Jensen.

"I make better bosun than that guy," Jensen said, pointing.

Mr. Ivor tapped his teeth. He stuck his neck out at Jensen, curious as a basket of snakes.

"Now he's trying to get the bosun's job," he reported to Sundstrom and me. "Not a chance! First insolence; then ambition. Odd!"

But next day Jensen took a breather right bang under Mr. Ivor's eyes on the after well deck. The men on the jumping deck had had a tough seance with some cargo gear. The rest of 'em had sneaked off for a loaf and a smoke but there was Jensen, planting his bottom heavily on the hatch in the wintry sun with the mate ten feet from him. Mr. Ivor was scandalized as well as mystified.

"Trying to make me lose face with the crew, that's what he's up to," he told Sundstrom. "Loafing in front of me! Watch him!"

"I thought he was running for office—as bose," I said.

Mr. Ivor sunk his eyes into me.

"A sea lawyer, that's what he is." He hit his buck teeth a clip. He wasn't satisfied with his own diagnosis.

"There's something screwy about that man and I've got to find out what it is!" he burst out.

I couldn't figure whether he was happy or sad about it. Anyhow, he had something to gnaw on. Sea lawyer, eager beaver, dumb cluck or mystery man?

On the bridge Mr. Ivor wrote in his notebook and then whacked the rail with the book. Tap-tappy-tap-tap—Tap-Tap!

Beyond the big Jensen problem it looked like the normal North Atlantic scuffle.

Up in his office under the bridge, according to the steward's department grapevine, Captain Rodd had all the financial pages of last month's newspapers spread out on his desk and was starting to figure from past performances when the stock market was going up and when the market was going down.

On the table in the crew messroom Tony Casassa, the crew messman, had all his sporting pages and past performances spread out and was starting to delve for the missing factor in form that made a horse win when it wasn't down there in the dope. The Old Man and Tony could have saved money by buying the same newspapers and dividing them up. But such petty economy was beyond these two financiers.

In the chill room, according to the blackgang scuttlebutt, the steward had opened up a cask containing whalemeat found by Peary during his return from the North Pole in the spring of 1909. He was cutting it up into filet mignon with a cold chisel and the bosun's Number One mallet.

The chief engineer—this lulu was from the deck—had cut through the bulkhead to get to the cargo in Number Two lower, rigged himself a still in the engineroom machine shop and was making wheat whiskey. One drink had the pleasant property of vivifying the mind to a point where you could sit down and project yourself into the leading role in any movie you had ever seen. After a couple you could rewrite the script. Three, and you could pick your own leading lady.

Sure, it looked like a normal run. But the North Atlantic didn't see it like that. The dry northwester piped down. A day later the sun slid under a soft grayness as the wind breathed gently out of the east. The breath increased. Before nightfall it was blowing a dead muzzler. Yes, we were getting it clammy out of the east at a season when it's all bitter westerlies. Right on the snoot. The seas made up fast all that night. By morning, if you could call that gray stuff sliding by us morning, we were going up and down like ants on a hammer.

Not even Mr. Ivor could get any work done on deck. He'd study Jensen on his trick at the wheel or lookout. Jensen was dummied up against the head-on weather and it must have been like trying to read character out of the top of a bitt.

Word went around that the mate's brown notebook had blown away. Actually he had it sunk deep under oilers that didn't protect him or anybody else from that damp chill. It would have penetrated a corked bottle.

The mate still stuck obstinately to try-

ing to size up the A.B. Maybe it took his mind off the gale.

I decided to swing into action myself. Not observation—action. About the end of a forenoon watch I waylaid Green, the bosun, down on the main deck.

"What's with Jensen, bose?" I asked.

Green pulled a sour mug and started talking. Throwing out repetitions, libels and profanity it boiled down to Green not knowing. But he ducked into Jensen's forecastle and came out with a couple of photos.

"Look what he's got stuck up on his bulkhead," he said.

One picture was of an old buffer in a peaked cap, a rugged gent giving with gray whiskers like Niagara gives with falls. On the back of it in a woman's careful hand was written: *"I'm sure some day my son will be a sea captain like his grandfather."*

The other photo was a girl, a nice looking blonde, not fancy. Solid.

"Wife?" I asked. Jensen was young to have one.

"She's waiting," Green said, "and she'll have whiskers like his grandfather before he gets a master's ticket. He has books, too, but I wouldn't know if he can read."

While through looking over the pics I bawled out the bose for prying into a shipmate's possessions, and blew. Jensen was the steady type, with a grandfather to emulate, a mother to please and a girl to marry. This dope didn't fit in at all with Jensen standing up to the mate, taking over the bosun's chore and resting in public, unless he was even more stupid than I'd figured him, which took some doing.

I ran into him in the working alleyway after he'd had his dinner and tackled him, spontaneous and magnanimous.

"Look, Jensen," I told him, "if a man wants to get along in a ship he ought to treat the mate with proper respect. Don't they teach apple polishing where you came from?"

He looked at me calmly and gave a little jerk of the head that I couldn't interpret in language.

"What I mean, Jensen, the way you're going, Mr. Ivor will fix your clock in this line. Not from malice. Duty."

Jensen blinked. He seemed to think a while. "I hope not, sir," he said at last and stood aside, politely, to let me pass.

He wasn't sulky. Not the articulate kind. I decided not to waste any more brain tissue on him. A dumb bunny, the thick way. Yet I had a feeling that maybe he'd got me; that maybe he'd decided something.

THE going got really rough. Suds quit rushing places on deck. There was argument about whether the engines would break loose from the holding down bolts to rattle around in her like lead dice in a rusty tin can or whether she'd simply shake the rivets out of her plates first and go down with the engines still firm on the bedplates. But nobody had enough zip to make book on it either way.

All hands knew that it wasn't just condenser discharge water that was pouring overside in a steady stream. Every once in a while somebody would step to the side to measure the height of his eye above the level of the sea in a smooth.

And of course that unending unnatural easterly, smothering the ship in a clammy mist and spume day and night, didn't boost anybody's spirits. No day. No night. Just fog—flying gray fog in a gale of wind. Days of that, with the bruising and pounding, melted backbones to threads.

Gruner, an O.S. that nobody would have lit a match on before then, got spiritual. He collected an audience when he began to wonder out loud whether something cataclysmic hadn't happened to the world. He wondered if there was still a continent above water astern of the ship and whether there was any port ahead for her to make that wasn't fathoms deep in that gray, running sea. Something might have slipped, like an atom bomb, Gruner's hollow voice intoned, and the old *Louisa* might be the only thing left in dim seas running around a landless world, doomed to crawl on into that easterly till her furnaces sucked her tanks dry of oil and her men ate her storeroom bare of food.

The funereal-voiced O.S. made the prospects of a sudden plunge to the bottom sound as attractive by comparison as a dive into Dinty's place.

And nobody contradicted Gruner with the back of a hand. That was bad. Men were as gray in the face and in the soul as the sea and the wind. Even Jensen and the mate were that way.

Captain Rodd remained invisible but Tony Casassa had folded up his stuff.

"Even the horses are getting too misty," he said sadly.

Well, I wouldn't want to bore you. Just multiply by nineteen days. The sea really handed it to us. Then, grudgingly, a greenish tinge showed in the gray and white streaked stuff alongside and we raised Bishop Rock, by the Scilly Isles off the tip of England's Land's End. We saw big seas smashing onto black rocks and were glad there was something left beside our old wagon to take the impact of those unending walls of water. Seven men kicked Gruner's pants inside half an hour.

The old *Louisa Lane* had climbed right through it and made a landfall. In the English Channel we were still getting it from almost dead ahead. But tremendous seas, waves that had balanced her groaning hull amidships on a single crest one minute and tried to fold her up between them the next, gradually shortened up some. We were riding a pneumatic riveter instead of a swinging hammer. Our tired hearts stayed up inside our chests again.

Mr. Ivor cheeped up about getting some rust chipped soon or maybe a bit of paint cleaned. And Suds came out of the steward's room, had a look at the Western Rocks and ran down the ladder to the forward well deck. Watching his chance, he scampered hellbent to the foc'sle head. He expressed himself with his legs and he was happy. Then he started back, circling the hatches.

The well deck was still no place for anything living. Paul Jensen ran down to the foot of the ladder and started calling Suds. But Suds was wild as a dog track rabbit that has escaped from the third rail. He didn't pay any attention, but leaped to a hatch top as a little water slopped in over the weather rail.

Green, the bosun, slung his long legs down the ladder. Mr. Ivor scuttled after him, calling to the pooch. Green scowled at Paul Jensen, who plainly wasn't going to leave the ladder. Then the bosun inflated his chest heroically and started out on the deck after the dog.

Jensen took a fast look to windward and clamped two hands on the bosun's arms. He pinned him against the ladder as if he had been welded there.

"Wait!" he said.

Mr. Ivor cocked his head forward for a moment and then brushed past the two seamen. Jensen never relaxed a muscle.

A cross sea hit her, a sea that came bulging in almost at right angles to the stuff that had been hitting her from ahead. It caught the ship with her rail down and poured aboard green.

Jensen had time to shift his hands on the bosun through the rail of the ladder. Green, getting the idea, gripped with both his.

Mr. Ivor, though his eyes were all on the dog, felt the thump of the sea behind him. He grabbed for the weather lifeline and lifted himself up, almost wrapping himself around the rope in his effort to make a little altitude. The sea came thundering across the deck. It hit Mr. Ivor. Its wallop against him parted the line he was climbing. It had taken plenty since it was rigged, that line, and nobody had been able to get forward to renew it.

The mate went down in a burst of foam as the ship rolled the breaking sea toward the leeward rail.

Halfway up the leeward ladder Suds had stopped, after a white streak of speed across the well deck. Out of danger, the pooch barked severely at the swirling water below him.

Something yellow, the mate's oiler, showed in the white foam on deck. Mr. Ivor had still got the grip of a waterside crimp on the after end of the broken line. When he swung near the foot of the leeward ladder he reached out his arm and hooked himself into it. He was on his knees and scrambling up the treads like a chain reaction before anybody could lay a hand on him. He looked as wet as three men. His watery blue eyes pivoted toward Jensen. The big A.B. had just started the bosun up the other ladder with a shove.

Mr. Ivor met them at the head of the ladder. His eyes dug into the calm seaman.

"If you saw that cross sea why didn't

you stop me, too, sailor?" he demanded. "What're you up to, hey?"

Jensen's broad forehead creased slightly before he answered soberly, "My mother always said that between two stools you came to the ground, sir. I had Green."

"Next time give both stools a berth!" the mate snapped. "Green could have saved that dog!"

"Only the dog could have done that," Jensen said, with a nod at Suds. "He moves too fast for the sea or man to catch."

Mr. Ivor took it, closed one eye at him and then started away. You could see he'd gone back to intensive work on Jensen. Had the A.B. wanted him overside? If so, why? And why hadn't he lied out of it by saying he hadn't seen the mate?

"Maybe Jensen don't like dogs much but he's got a higher opinion of their intelligence than some," I said to Mr. Ivor. "Help any about what makes him tick?"

Mr. Ivor still wasn't mad. Nobody was mad since we'd made our landfall. He stopped dead.

"Yes—somehow the incident should help," he muttered. "Every act helps."

"Maybe he thinks like a dog," I suggested. "I've still got two dollars down on sheer stupidity."

"You're an expert on that," the mate said and headed for dry clothes.

The choppier seas gave the old *Louisa* chills and shudders but she made way against them. She had licked the sea. We had licked the sea, by Peter! We felt mighty blame satisfied with ourselves.

She crawled past the Scillies, past Land's End and with pumps churning closed the granite coast of Cornwall. They looked fine and solid, those cliffs, even through the thickening grayness of early nightfall. Yes, though it was still blowing half a gray gale out of the east, we had licked the sea.

The scuttlebutt was that Captain Rodd had decided to take her into Falmouth for emergency repairs, before he got his financial charts wet.

About ten o'clock that night I was walking a black bridge between spasms of taking bearings on the coastal lights. I was awake. But I knew that in the jumping ship just about all hands, including some of my watch, were sleeping like the dead after that nerve-jangling passage.

One second on the lonely bridge there was blackness, wind, spray and the thrust of the churning wheel. Next a flash lit up the world all around me. With it burst the ear-tearing roar of an explosion. I whirled around. Water in a white, streaking mass was still dropping from out of the black overhead onto her stern. It thundered heaviest aft of the midship house on the port side.

I didn't need any diagram. That sea we had licked so thoroughly had played a dirty card. It had nuzzled a derelict mine up against her quarter. And as I stood staring aft the lively deck under my feet was going logy and dead.

THIRTY-FIVE minutes later, wet as a school of herring, the crew of Number Two lifeboat stopped bailing. All hands squinted through the murk at the uplifting bow of the old *Louisa Lane*. Mr. Ivor had gotten us all away. How much of it was psychology I wouldn't know but he'd had the tough weather side for launching.

The *Louisa* went under without much fuss, without even a bark out of her boilers. Maybe the old wagon was shot from that fight. And now the sea had us where it wanted us.

Half a gale in a lifeboat is worse than a hurricane in a ship. Not even the chief could get her motor turning over. We kept looking for the Old Man's boat. It wasn't until later we learned that Captain Rodd, complete with ship's papers and financial dope, had worked Number One into Falmouth without losing a man.

It was row her till you broke down and then bail her till your hands turned from wood to stone in the bitter water. Mr. Ivor, discarding the little rudder profanely, was keeping the boat crabbing toward the Cornish coast with a long steering oar.

"We'll make it in a breeze!" he cried. "The coast's only a few miles to north'ard and as full of holes as a cheese. It's a pipe, eh—" he thumped the back of the

oarsman nearest to him before he recognized him—"eh—uh—isn't it, Jensen?"

Jensen didn't ease his stroke.

"No, sir," he said. "I think we're more apt to fill."

The mate growled like a schnauzer and Suds, on the thwart, gave a sympathetic yelp.

"Got Jensen taped yet, sir?" I asked Mr. Ivor softly, dumping my bucket over the quarter rail. "That doesn't sound so dumb—unless she comes apart before she fills."

"Subversive, that's what he is," Mr. Ivor muttered. "I'm almost sure of it."

Plenty of times in the next six hours we'd have settled for a short swim and a quick finish. Being frozen is O.K. but being half frozen, sliced raw with cutting salt spray, bruised by the wild jumping of the boat, and aching to your marrow is tough to take. The sea we'd thought licked piled on the agony. Minutes were hours and we pulled oars and threw water.

At last we closed the coast. We started matching what was left of our strength against the sideswipe of a fast running tidal current. We kept rowing all out to reach the lights that showed a break in the high looming cliffs—some fishing port snuggled in a cleft. The lights were close and then they slid sideways.

Mr. Ivor thrust forward his hard brown mug and narrow shoulders, tense and watchful, like an old ship's figurehead. Suddenly he flung all his weight on the steering oar.

"Back water!" he cried. "Back—"

A wave had picked us up, a sharp crested wave. It threw the boat ahead like a chip. With an ugly crunch the bottom mashed up under our feet. The wave shattered in fury on the rock that had smashed us. We were there, hard on it.

We scrambled up out of water spurting through the bottom and gaped at the vague black mass that had broken wave and boat. Suds, with a yelp, streaked forward and jumped off the bow. A small white blur, he moved up a slant of the thicker blackness.

"Out and up on the ledge!" Ivor shouted. A sea came crashing over her stern to start us moving. Half numb we were, but we all had enough fire left to swarm overside and climb the barnacle-studded granite that sloped out of the sea. Solid rock was under us.

But the sea hadn't finished with us yet. This was an offshore ledge. The high black cliffs that had loomed so near when we were in the boat were the full length of the old *Louisa* away. In between was leaping white water.

The sea had us trapped. Over the ledge, every time a big one hit, spray like buckshot swept and then turned to icewater as it dribbled in between oilers and skin.

We flattened out in crevices on the leeward side of the granite, throats raw with salt, and waited for light. Man! How we waited for light!

Toward dawn the dropping tide gave us a chance to grab some gear out of the lifeboat. The waterproofed match case was gone but Jensen found the other one, with the self-igniting flares. There was a little oil left in the busted lantern. We burned the flares and lighted a bit of kapok soaked in oil. Just as we were getting a fire going with slivers cut from an oar a dollop of water hit and that was that.

But up on the cliffs somebody had seen the red glare. We made out a light and then it started swinging. It must have been a lantern with guys taking turns swinging it. It didn't do any good except to keep us alive.

After a while there were more lights and Morse code winked that a boat would be coming. The tide dropped more and the flying spray let up enough to keep us conscious of our misery.

Nobody said much but once in a while Suds would whine or let out a yip or two and look for some warmer guy to huddle against.

Jensen got to exploring as soon as it was light enough and when he came back Mr. Ivor roused, shook himself like Suds and jumped and flapped his arms. Suds came to life, too, and went sniffing at seaweed.

"It's just a matter of an hour or two —maybe less, boys," the mate said. "No boat could navigate in this nest of rocks in the dark but as soon as the light strengthens . . . Anything to report, Jensen?"

"Yes, sir," said Jensen. "This is a half-tide rock. There's weed right up to the top. We hit it on a falling tide but it's rising again now. Fast."

Nobody said anything but you could hear their spirits dropping like lead sinkers. You could see a regular half-submerged graveyard of granite all around us now. It was chewing the sea white.

Mr. Ivor tapped his teeth with his knuckles. His notebook was gone.

"Subversive twaddle!" he muttered. "That man—"

"Maybe he's an optimist," I said. "Though my two dollars is still—"

He wasn't listening.

THE lifeboat, one of those blue, turtle-backed motor craft stationed all around the coast of England, showed up to seaward of us while the light was still faint. I'll give those Limeys credit. They kept threading a shifting course into that graveyard. Their boat was lifting and plunging in among pinnacles and teeth that would have ripped it like you'd rip a pea pod. It was tough slow work and about as dangerous as jumping off the cliff. The coxswain needed thirty eyes and the reaction time of a nervous barracuda. He had it.

By now it was light enough to see the top of the cliff a good two hundred feet above us. It was lined with people watching. I wouldn't have minded being one of the spectators myself.

The coxswain kept her coming and we sweated icicles with him. He'd glance up weather now and then, as if he knew the wind would rise with the sun. That would mean finish.

He got near enough for the man on the bow to stand by with a heaving line. But the coxswain gave no orders; he stood high and stared with slitted eyes into the water alongside. A red Cornishman, he was, solid and squat. Abruptly, with motor opened up, he eased his craft into a split in the ledge to leeward. It was no smooth harbor; his crew started fending off like leaping lunatics, but it would save time. He flipped a hand at us and we went jumping for the lifeline dangling outside the gunwale of his boat. We got lent a hand when his men, holding her off, could spare one. But mostly we went aboard like rockets, half dead as we were.

"All of ye?" cried the coxswain. "Time for 'un to go!"

A yelp cut the air like the shrill of a whistle. It was Suds. While we'd been watching the lifeboat the pooch had wandered out on a spine of the ledge that ran seaward to chew at a dead fish washed up in a crevice. Now, pointing his ears and flinging his legs, he kiyoodled frantically at us.

Suds was in a jam. The fast coming tide had cut him off. You got a twenty-six foot rise in some spring tides there. Seas were crashing and thundering across the low neck of the projecting line of rock. It wasn't the sort a pup could swim in. Suds knew it, too. He leaped and pawed at the edge of the waves.

The coxswain shook his head. His salt-crusted face was grim.

Jensen, beside me in the lifeboat, straightened up. Those thick shoulders of his seemed to widen. He turned his elbows till his hands were palm forward and he looked seaward under heavy eyebrows.

"Wait!" he said. "I get him."

"You can't reach 'im alive, man!" cried the cox. "The seas—" Jensen jumped for the ledge, splashed into the water alongside and climbed up. At a lumbering run he crossed the rock. He waited for a sea to start churning through the gap. As the worst of it passed he plunged in. His shoulders met the rush of water like deep driven piling. Next moment, as the wave drained away, he floundered on a few feet. He dropped flat on his face with fingers gripping the barnacles and let the next one rush over him. A tough moment. Then, as the sea poured off, Jensen's square head came up through the water. Already he was lunging on. His grandfather, his mother and his girl had a right to be proud of him then.

Suds saw his chance. He sprang toward the struggling man. His thin white body seemed to sail through the air.

It was a bad break for Jensen. He had timed the waves to cross the gap. The pooch broke it up. But Jensen had a choice.

He could save himself. Or he could catch the dog. He stopped dead. He

grabbed the dog. He was caught waist deep with a big one coming and no way on him. He twisted half around and flipped the dog toward the main ledge. Suds landed running, well above the water.

I saw Jensen's face split in a savage grin. Then the sea hit him. He was knocked clear of the gap and disappeared in the white water thinly covering granite.

The coxswain groaned.

But Jensen wasn't through. His head came up again, his head and one clawing arm in the mess of white water beyond the gap. I wouldn't know whether he was crawling or swimming, but he threshed his way a couple of feet toward the ledge before another one hit him. He seemed to flatten and squirm into some submerged crack in the granite, tighter than he had before. He went under just as the wall of water surged over him.

This time he must have been knocked loose but his powerful body showed again only a couple of feet further to leeward. The guy had heart. He came up with his clothes shredded off him and his arms and body scored crimson with barnacles. On hands and knees he clawed toward the ledge. He met a small one head on, arms and legs tense and powerful neck arched. He was moving before the worst of it drained away.

Next moment he was facing another one, and this baby meant business. It had drive behind it, those tons of water, drive that no man could withstand. Jensen played it the only way. He didn't duck or brace himself; his legs churned forward through the water sucking away. He raced slantingly toward the sea, risking a hole or a trip in the hidden footing that would mean a sweep into the meat grinding graveyard beyond the gap. He launched himself at the ledge like a man making a tackle and his thick fingers clamped on a break in the granite.

The sea hit but his head and shoulders were beyond it. His body tailed out in the drag of the current. Jensen was holding tighter than any barnacle. The sea could not tear him loose. In an instant, mother naked, he was up on the ledge and staggering toward the lifeboat.

Suds had already been dragged aboard; everybody reached for Jensen.

On the cliff above us the crowds were jumping and waving like a jitterbug convention. Jensen had put a considerable dent in that famous British reserve. They'd seen the desperate choice he'd made to save the dog.

In the bottom of the lifeboat, with Suds trembling in his lap, Mr. Ivor was beating out a tune on his teeth with his knuckles. His faded blue eyes were just narrow slits of perplexity as he studied the panting seaman's bloody face.

I'll spare you that return through the granite strewn water and I'll keep the memory of the hot whiskey and grub at the end of it for myself. A friendly town that was. But all through everything Mr. Ivor kept muttering at intervals, "I just don't get that fellow. I don't—know."

BUT by the end of the week, when all hands were on their feet again, the mate was almost happy. Something had happened that gave him an answer to his problem. He had Jensen explained.

Let me break it to you that by that time we were all heroes. Why? Because we were shipmates of Paul Jensen and collected ten per cent of his glory. And who was Paul Jensen? He was the man who had risked his life for a dog.

These Britishers take some knowing. They approved of the coxswain and his crew for sticking their necks out into that watery graveyard to save us. It was quite the right thing to do, and it was well done and all that sort of thing, but of course it was their duty, y'know.

What the town, the county, the whole country—as we discovered when the London papers arrived—was thoroughly wrought up over was Paul Jensen, A.B. You know these Limeys really go for animals. And no rules of austerity or traditions of reserve apply where dogs are concerned. The dogs of England are better fed than the people; more letters are written to the newspapers about injustices to our dumb friends than about raw deals handed to our two-legged ones. Yes, in harassed England Jensen rated.

You'd have thought so that Saturday afternoon. We were all bunched up in front of a little speaker's stand the Cornishmen had knocked together up on the

cliff. And it seemed like most of the British race was crowded in behind us. There'd been a meeting of a county society that handled the welfare of our four-legged friends and resolutions had been passed and action taken.

Jensen was on the stand surrounded by titles and names, the elite of the friends of dumb animals, and Captain Rodd was present and the English agent of the line. And of course Suds was up there, too, right in front, on a cushion, pointing his ears around real interested though a bit weary still.

The powwow was all leading up to the presentation of the society's gold medal to Jensen.

Mr. Ivor stood beside me, chuckling.

"I've got the man taped at last," he said. "Jensen's a show-off. Stronger than the fear of punishment or death is his desire to spread himself, to attract attention, to have his mates gawk at him. That's why he tripped me and didn't run; that's—"

Somebody on the platform gave him a dirty look for talking. Mr. Ivor piped down, though still bubbling some. But I noticed that every once in a while he gave his teeth a crack with his knuckles, absently and maybe a little uncertainly, with one eye half closed. He wasn't dead sure of his diagnosis.

Finally they finished building up Jensen for laying down his life for a friend, even though that friend was only a dog. Particularly, they meant. They stood him up and stuck the gold medal on his chest and shoved a purse in his mitt and shook hands with him. When the applause finally quit, there was Jensen, trapped all alone up front, with his barnacle-scratched face a lot less smooth and contented than usual. The chairman sort of prodded him in a murmur to give with the language. And Jensen gave.

"I didn't know all this was going to happen," he said and everybody applauded, except the mate.

"Grandstander!" Ivor muttered. "That's him!"

"This is a good medal," Jensen said and his hand went up to it. "For good people. But it is not for me."

His bandaged fingers were fumbling with the clasp. And suddenly you couldn't hear a cheep on the whole cliff. His face looked the way it did the day I'd advised him to butter up the mate.

"It wasn't for the dog," Jensen said. "The sea had pounded the ship for weeks, a good ship, and kicked us around like lice, and then sunk her. We got away like drowning rats and the sea played with us, and kicked our lifeboat onto those rocks and made us suffer more. But the boat came and the sea had only the dog."

Jensen lifted his solid fist and looked down over the cliff.

"I was sore at the sea," he said. "And the sea had Suds. So I went back for him. It could have been for my pipe."

He pulled off the medal and put it and the purse on the table beside the jug of water.

"A good medal, but it has nothing to do with me," young Jensen said to the deepest silence I ever heard.

Beside me Mr. Ivor's breath hissed out through his teeth.

"Ju—das!" he muttered. "That's it!"

His elbow hit me a crack that bent my ribs.

"The fellow hangs on by plain, old-fashioned honesty," Ivor said. "He won't say a word out of line. He didn't on board—he won't! Honest and be damned, that's Jensen! What a bosun! What a shipmaster one of these days!"

His grin was broader than his face. Ivor was happy at last.

But he was all alone in his happiness. The blasting silence still hung over the cliff. There were purpling faces on the stand. Jensen had kicked international amity square in the teeth. The crowd was stunned, as if socked by a lead club.

*It could have been for his pipe!*

Jensen turned and walked down the steps. Though his face was set he looked a little sad.

Suds got up, yawned, nosed a crack in the boards and pattered after Jensen, keeping close to his legs.

As sudden as that mine had exploded, voices cut loose in a cheer that was like the roar of a line squall.

What was good enough for Suds was good enough for all hands on that cliff.

But the yelp that really hurt my ear was Mr. Ivor's.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

*One of the miners shouted, "Hell, let's get this over with. Pull out that wagon!"*

# A HANGING AT

THE Mexican stood on the high wagon seat in the shade of a towering cottonwood. The complacency he had exhibited throughout the long afternoon seemed to be deserting him, dark shadows fell across his face as the sun sank lower in the west and uncertainty grew in his black eyes. He shuffled his feet and the wagon seat creaked, then a thick silence crept under the trees, a somber thing that touched spines with ice and moved on, leaving no other sign of its passage. The Mexican seemed to be listening as the coarse rope rubbed the bronzed skin behind his left ear.

"Señor," he said finally, his voice huskily plaintive, "I only took the horse because I can ride faster than I can walk."

Careful John Hawes rubbed his flat thumbs thoughtfully beneath the broad

By BEN SMITH

# WILLOW SPRINGS

ribbons of his suspenders and rocked back on his heels. "We hung a man here last week," John said to nobody in particular, "and we didn't have near the case against him."

Abe Lewis, the fat lawyer, his shiny serge suit resembling more a feed sack tied in the middle, stepped into the tense ring of cowmen and miners, gathered around the wagon. "Why do you call yourself *El Tajador?*" he asked, his tiny eyes screwed up in shrewdness.

"I am a chopper, a cutter of wood," the Mexican replied, his black eyes going hopelessly about the circle of hostile faces.

"Your given name?"

"Luis."

It was true that Luis looked more like a hoeman, a farmer, than he did a miner or cowman. He wore high-bibbed overalls

and shoes on his feet rather than peg-heeled boots. Only his supple hands, tied tightly behind his back, seemingly betrayed him. His fingers were long, sensitive and uncalloused.

"He's lyin' in his teeth," Tremblin' Jim shouted. "He's a gunny. He stole my horse."

*El Tajador* said nothing.

Abe Lewis hawked importantly and spat into the dust beside the wagon wheel. "His whole story's a lie," he judged. "He made a mistake when he took Tremblin's horse and another when he rode it into Willow Springs right in the broad open daylight."

Careful John rubbed his tobacco stained whiskers uncertainly. The Mexican was young, wiry, dark of hair with high cheek-bones that hinted of Aztec blood in his ancestry.

He looked like a pretty smart man but his moves up to now had been, in John's opinion, stupid.

The thing just didn't make sense. *El Tajador,* as he called himself, had taken Tremblin's horse, the lanky Tremblin' Jim Hooper had seen him do it. Why, then, did he ride openly into Willow Springs where he would most certainly be apprehended and questioned? Somewhere, behind the unfathomable curtain of his black eyes, *El Tajador* was still concealing something.

"You say you heard these rannies talkin'?" John asked.

"*Si.*" Luis looked at Careful hopefully. Of all the men present, John Hawes seemed to be the only one inclined to be fair.

"I was coming back from the forest at nightfall," *El Tajador* continued, "walking along an arroyo, when I noticed the campfire. I stopped on the edge of the gulch, wondering who could be making dry camp in such a spot. It was then I heard their talk. While they were discussing what they were going to do, I felt a great anger at them, for they were evil men. Thus I walked toward Willow Springs to spread the alarm. It was just after daylight when I took Señor Hooper's horse from his corral so that I might travel faster."

"He keeps on lyin'," Tremblin' Jim said. "Let's shut him up for good." He stretched a raw-boned hand for the bridle of one of the horses hitched to the wagon. Abe Lewis grunted approval and reached for the other animal.

LUIS, the wood-cutter, looked up at the new yellow rope that stretched into the cottonwood above his head and began praying in Spanish. Careful John held up one hand. "Just a minute," he said loudly. Luis stopped mumbling, his black eyes alert.

"Why'd they pick today?" John asked him.

"I think, Señor," *El Tajador* replied, "that tomorrow was payday at the mines and they would be certain of getting much *dinero.* For that reason, they were to rob the bank today."

"It makes sense," Careful John admitted, swinging to face the rest of them. "Tomorrow *is* mine payday."

"And everybody in the county knows it," someone shouted. "He's still tryin' to fill a bad hand."

"We can't have greasers stealin' horses and gettin' away with it, can we?" Tremblin' Jim pulled suggestively on the bridle he was holding, but there was a certain lack of aggressiveness in his movement.

The Mexican scanned the ring of faces again. It was not altogether because of the theft of the horse, although that was bad enough, it was partly because of his race. A white man would have had at least a fairer hearing. Luis swallowed convulsively at the growing lump in his throat and resumed his praying, yet it seemed that even his mask of frightened sobriety concealed some mysterious, secret laughter.

"That the whole story?" Careful John asked. "You heard these men plottin' to rob the Willow Springs bank and you came to warn us, takin' Tremblin's horse in order to make better time?"

"Señor, as God is my witness, that is true."

John cleared his throat. "Man," he said, "you're either a hero or the biggest damn fool in three states."

One of the miners, a red-bearded hulk of a man who had thus far remained silent, shouted, "Hell, let's get this over with. Pull out that wagon!"

A mutter of impatience ran about the mass of men like angry flame sweeping wind-washed grass. The temper of their anger was a tangible thing, beating against the Mexican.

Tremblin' Jim, his hand on the bridle of the off-horse in the wagon team, stood on one foot and then the other. Finally, he relinguished his grip and moved away. It was evident that his temper was growing cool and he was less certain of just what to do. The miner with the red beard stepped into Tremblin's tracks and began tugging at the team. Abe Lewis, on the other bridle, stood pat looking toward John Hawes.

Careful John, Willow Springs banker, had been appointed temporary judge for the hanging and the final decision was his to make. The rest of them, miners and cowmen alike, constituted the sham of a jury. John stood firm, like an old mossy oak, pondering. A hanging was nothing new to Willow Springs, but Careful John prided himself on the fact that no man had been strung up that didn't deserve it. There was something about *El Tajador* that defied analysis and John Hawes was going forward slowly.

Luis, *El Tajador,* the self-styled cutter of wood continued with his silent prayer. At least it seemed he was praying, his stiff lips moved and his eyes were closed. The cottonwood above him moved restlessly in a slight breeze and the new yellow rope tapped behind his ear.

Careful John, arriving at some decision, made an impatient gesture with his big hand.

"Luis," he said, not unkindly, "stealing a man's horse is a very serious thing."

*El Tajador* looked down at him, his black eyes enigmatic.

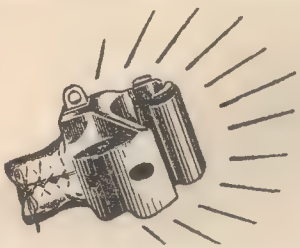
"*Si,* Señor," he replied, "but I thought that it would be excusable since the cause was good."

"Hell," shouted the miner with the red beard, "he's just stallin' for time. The Mex figures we'll get outa the notion if we stand around here long enough."

From the direction of Willow Springs, a mile down the dusty, sun-drenched road, came a spatter of shots, sounding flat and unreal in the still air. Afterward came a brief lull, then another fusillade, followed by a mumbling silence.

"Holy cow," yelled Tremblin' Jim, "they're cleanin' out the bank and every able-bodied man we got's out here."

*El Tajador,* standing aloof on the wagon seat was forgotten as there began a mad scramble for horses. Many of the miners who had walked to the grove under the cottonwoods, began running at a slogging trot toward Willow Springs, the hanging forgotten in their concern for their money. Only Careful John and the lawyer, Abe Lewis, remained by the wagon.



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205 E. 42nd St., N. Y. City 17

"Luis," John said to the Mexican, "I guess you told the truth." He cut the grinning *El Tajador* free, leaving the rope tied in the spreading limbs of the cottonwood. He watched as Luis walked toward the road, then breaking into a half-run as he turned toward the open country.

"Poor devil," Careful John muttered. "He's had the livin' hell scared out of him today."

When Abe Lewis climbed awkwardly to the wagon seat beside Careful John, he noticed that the older man had a ghost of a smile on his face.

"You're mighty cheerful," Abe said, "for a man whose bank's bein' robbed right this minute."

Careful John looked at the fat lawyer, clucked cheerfully at the horses, and laughed softly.

*EL TAJADOR* had walked two miles from Willow Springs before he left the road and darted into a dry gulch that would lead back to the wooded hills.

In a glen, taking their ease on a flat limestone outcropping, two men were waiting. Three horses stamped fretfully at the flies and attempted to crop at the short quack grass.

"He will be very angry," one of the men said. His swarthy face was pinched as if pickled overlong in alum. He wore a sombrero sizes too large for him and it splayed his ears at right angles to his narrow head. He wore the melancholic air of a frustrated bloodhound.

"*Si*," his companion replied, his perturbation causing his fat face to drip with oily perspiration. "He will be terrible in his anger."

"How was it, I wonder," the fat one continued, "that he could be so sure there would be no one in Willow Springs?"

"For one of his accomplishments," the first man explained, "this was nothing. Our leader is of great daring and emptying even a town of its men was a simple thing."

The fat one shuddered. "I am afraid," he admitted, worry eating deep creases in his lardy face. "He is so wise, so all-knowing of what men will do. It is not for nothing he has been called 'The Chopper'."

The thin one wriggled convulsively. "*El Tajador*," he said, "when he is angry, cuts men down like trees in the forest."

The fat Mexican stood up, moving toward his horse. "It would be wise, I think, for us to leave his horse here while we seek health in some distant place."

They swung to the saddle. "For once, my fat friend, you betray good judgment." The thin one sighed gustily. "Let *El Tajador* hear the story from other than our lips. That, indeed, will be much safer."

An empty saddle-bag lay on the ground, mutely telling its story of failure . . .

"*Madre de Dios*," *El Tajador* muttered as he walked toward the clearing. "The risks I take are too great, even for such a prize. Someday, unless I show great care, someone will hang me, certainly."

But, thinking of the money, he felt better and whistled as he walked into the clearing, to stand as one stunned looking at the empty saddle-bag and the hoof marks leading toward the hills. The sign was plain to *El Tajador*. The guilty birds had cleaned the nest and flown to safer places. Catching his horse, Luis rode after them, two six-guns from his saddle-bags tucked in the waist of his overalls and his fingers on the reins were hooked like the claws of some great forest bird . . . reaching out for the flesh and blood of its prey . . .

It was dusk when Careful John and Abe Lewis reached the group of miners milling on the board sidewalk before the bank.

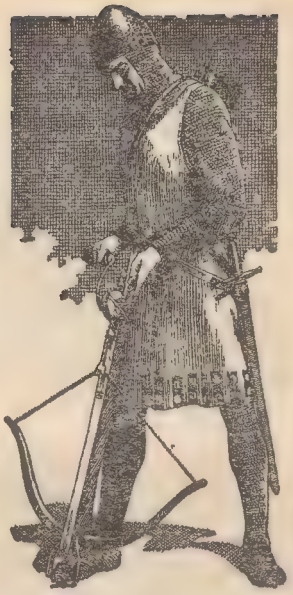
"Take it easy, boys," John shouted, standing in the wagon, "you'll all get your money."

Abe Lewis stared at him open-mouthed. Hawes grinned. "Look," he said. Under the wagon seat, the plank that *El Tajador* had almost used as a step toward Eternity, lay a large bundle wrapped in gunny sacking.

"I played it careful," John said, "and took the money along to the lynchin' party. The owlhooters didn't get a thing."

And *El Tajador* had stood, a new rope about his neck, gambling with human nature for something that was, even then, safe beneath his feet.

# DAVID HAD A SLINGSHOT



*A FACT STORY*

By

**ED DIECKMANN, JR.**

IN AN age which has spawned such lethal trinities as bacterial warfare, the atom bomb and pyramid clubs, one is apt to feel that man has reached the summit in the art of legal murder. Yet his skill in helping his fellows from this world did not attain that peak solely with the advent of gunpowder and the atom.

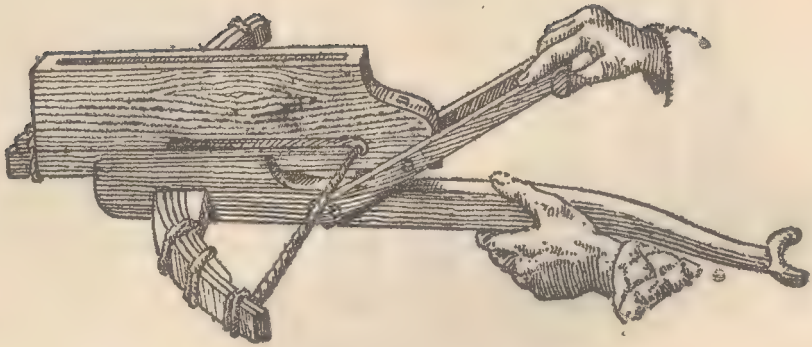
More than once this world's Goliaths have been brought down by a little well-timed ingenuity. Now David might have had nothing but a slingshot, but brother, he really started something! Let's take a look at what other Davids have done; and every one of them without benefit of either chemical propellants or atomic cussedness.

Take the well-known crossbow, for instance. Still considered a sporting weapon throughout the world, few of those who use it realize that it was invented by a Greek, one Zaphyrus of Tarentum, about 300 B.C.! Brought into popular use in the 12th century, it soon acquired a frightfulness all its own. For it not only had range, shooting up to 380 yards, but it could pierce armor and was unbelievably accurate.

Aimed at the forehead of a man fifty yards off, the heavy bolt would hit him in the chin!

A typical steel crossbow of the Middle Ages had a pull of over 1000 pounds! One that you can see in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, has a resistance of 1640 pounds! So deadly and horrible did the crossbow become, that soon after it was introduced it was outlawed. The Pope himself forbade its use against

DECORATIONS BY L. STERNE STEVENS



*Chinese repeating crossbow, just before it is discharged. The action of the lever lifts the bow-string out of the notch.*

Christians in the Second Lateran Council of 1139.

For one of the most astounding contraptions of mayhem, we have only to go back to the Chinese-Japanese war of 1894-1895. Where they got it, how or when are unknown, but the Chinese forces actually had a REPEATING CROSSBOW! Small, with a maximum range of 150 yards, it could shoot ten poison-tipped arrows in fifteen seconds!

Equipped with a box magazine running the length of the stock, and an ingeniously simple mechanism, it was perfect for defending fortified positions.

The arrows were made of bamboo, like the bow itself, and were not accurate beyond eighty yards. Yet the Chinese repeating crossbow left many a Japanese casualty on the slopes of the mountain passes. For you see, 100 men could fire 1000 arrows in fifteen seconds—literally a rain of death! Entire Jap assault teams were wiped out by this wicked little weapon.

Another weapon, and one that to this day has never been surpassed, was the Turkish Bow. Made of horn, sinew and wood, it had a pull of around 160 pounds and could hurl a flight arrow over 800 yards!

To fully appreciate that statement, you must realize that no archer, past or present, has ever approached even 700 yards without using the "free style." That is, lying on his back and bracing the bow with his feet. Pierson, of Cincinnati, set a record in this manner, in 1946, of just over 668 yards. Yet the Turkish bowmen of the late 18th century thought nothing of shooting between 750 and 810 yards. And in the upright position. Their record, set by the Emperor, Sultan Selim, is 838 yards!

Unfortunately, the formula for making the strong, elastic glue that held the composite part of the bow together, has been lost. There have been no such bows made for over 125 years.

Now if you mention the word "catapult" to the average adventure-story fan, he'll know that you're talking about the mechanical artillery perfected by the Greeks and Romans and used right down to the advent of cannon. What he probably won't know is just how amazing those weapons really were.

There were two types of catapults: the ballista and the catapult proper. Both worked on the torsion in twisted sinews and horsehair. The ballista resembled a gigantic, blown-up crossbow, while the catapult was basically a wooden arm set and twisted in a length of cordage. It was fitted with either a sling or a receptacle very much like a jai-alai player's cesta.

Because of its accuracy, the ballista was the pet-baby of the Greeks. As it had a pull of 2000 to 4000 pounds, it could send a sixty-pound rock 450 yards—or a six-foot javelin-arrow over 500!

An intriguing sidelight here, is that Abbo, a medieval scribe, wrote that at the siege of Paris by the Norsemen in 886, he once saw four men spitted on one ballista bolt! Trust the inevitable sadist on the scene to remark, "Turn

'em slowly, men. There's nothing like basted Norsemen!"

As to the catapult itself, its average range for a sixty-pound projectile was 550 yards; however, they had some giants with a pull of fifteen tons or 30,000 pounds! These, when fitted with slings and light projectiles, could reach out to 700 and 800 yards!

But even these records are mild when you hear that the Greeks actually had a pneumatic ballista! Yes, and it was complete to pistons, hollow cylinders and air-tightness! Of course it was too costly to mass-produce. "But by Jupiter," says Professor Jerry Laudermilk, foremost modern authority on catapults, "it worked!"

Well, those Greeks had a word for everything, and everything for the word ballista. They finally perfected an automatic model. Called the *polybolos*, or "many-arrows," it had a large cylinder turned by a crank. Four javelin-arrows per minute it spat out!

Considering the size of both the weapon and arrow, this was indeed a marvelous rate of fire.

Over 2200 years later, this very machine, with its revolving cylinder, was to plant the seed of an idea in the mind of a young inventor. And thereby he gave to the fighting men of his time the present which bore his name: the Gatling gun!

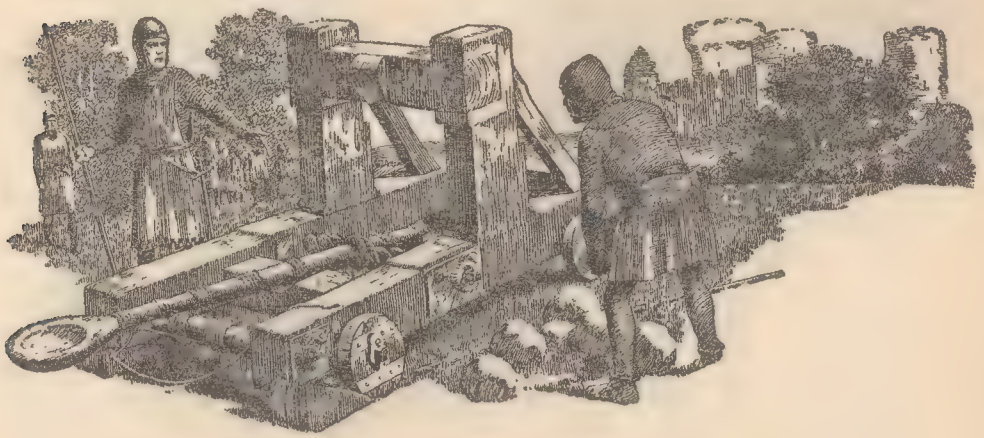
Now it's only logical to suppose that catapults went out with the Dodo bird and the debut of big guns. But the last one was used in warfare as recently as 1782. The Siege of Gibraltar was the scene. The besiegers were the French and Spanish fleets.

It seems that a group of Spanish marines had secured a foot-hold on a ledge that was just out of reach of mortar fire. The situation was desperate until a Lord Heathfield laid a plan before General Melville, commanding officer of the British defenders.

Within three days General Melville had constructed a catapult capable of throwing heavy boulders. And the next morning it took only two hours to clear that ledge of Spaniards.

A while back in this article the long bow took a back seat to the Turkish version. It is only fitting that the once national arm of Britain should have its revenge. Remember Brown Bess, the rifle with which the British army scourged Europe? Brown Bess, the chief arm of the British until as late as 1940? Well, shortly after the Napoleonic Wars, it was proven in a series of experiments that the long bow was more efficient at all ranges up to 150 yards than was Bess!

If there is a transparent fellow in green hovering around as you read this, don't let it bother you. It's only Robin Hood. He's puffing out his chest!



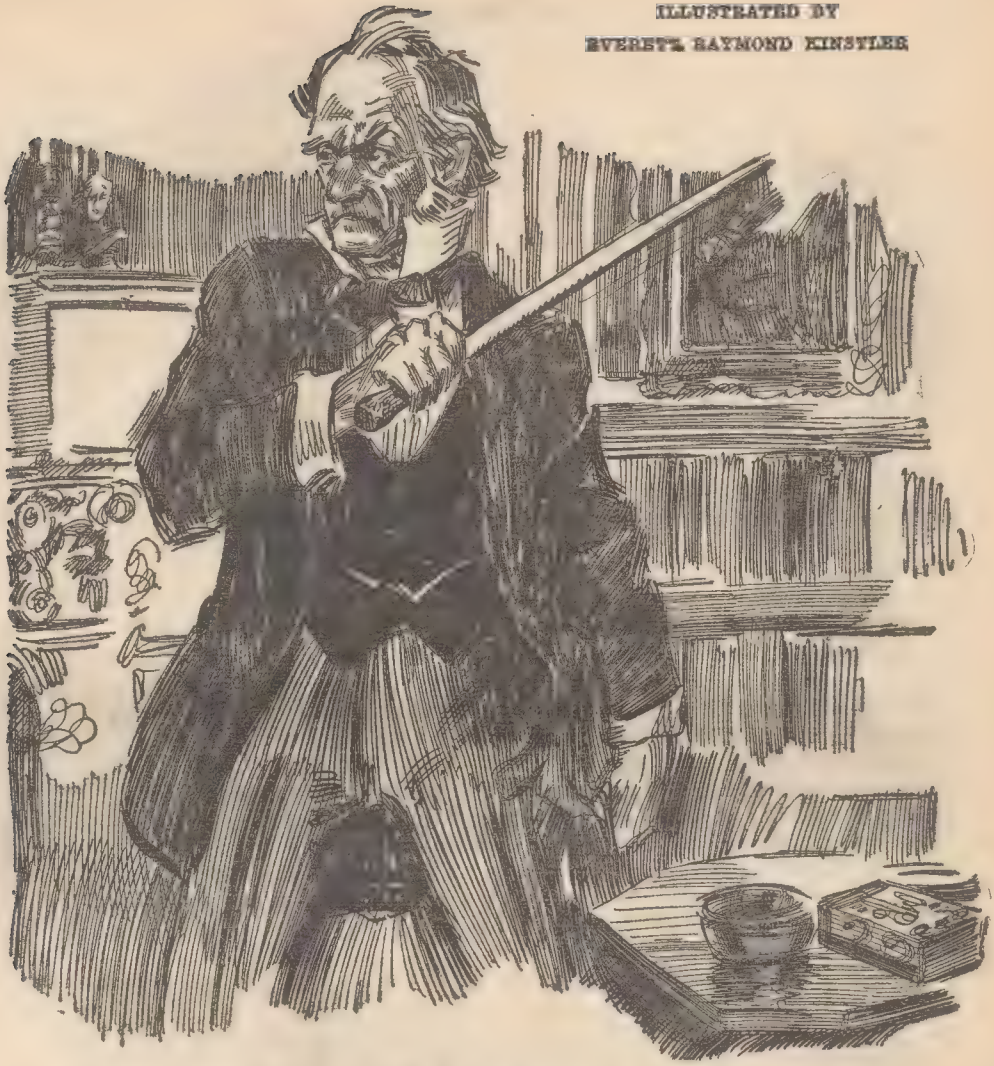
*Catapult: Weight 1½ tons; range, with a 60-lb. stone ball, 300 yards.*

By ROBERT R. SAWYER

# THE LAST PAYMENT

An Off-the-Trail Story

ILLUSTRATED BY
EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER



*Before Roger Coldring could wipe the expression of amazement from his face, the little man brought the cane up to strike him a hard, sharp blow.*

HE WAS a small man and frail, and his clothes in the style of the day were ill-fitting. Indeed, as he made his way with difficulty through the blinding sleet that blanketed the cobbled waterfront streets, the appearance of his worn flapping greatcoat and the sore-used beaver clutched desperately atop his head was such as to remind one of cast-off finery. Salvage, surely, from someone far more grand and robust in health and pocket than this poor figure. Sparrow-like, his small peaked face bobbed and ducked continuously within the great up-turned collar as he bitterly fought the slanting icy punishment. The gale driving in across the docks of South Street from Lower New York Bay and the sea seemed to take cruel delight in buffeting and whirling him. It seemed the wind were shrieking to him that he was a fool, and a pitiable one at that, to chance the deserted streets on such an afternoon. Fool! Fool! screamed the storm crazily. And the little man shook his head stubbornly within the worn velvet of his collar and plunged on with even more determination, as if the mad taunt was ringing in his ears and might hold him from his purpose.

At length, he arrived at a particularly

prosperous looking block of three and four-storied mercantile establishments. He paused, looking up and twisting himself against the sleet. Their neat, sturdy brick and fieldstone fronts openly faced the cluttered wharves and docks, and looked upon the lines of soaring rigging and lean thrusting prows that reached out over the broad cobbled length of South Street. The little man searched the building faces, some already showing warm squares of light against the lengthening afternoon, and then, seeming to make up his mind, stepped into the first. The warmth within, laden as it was with the rich fragrances of Ceylon and the Indies, struck his senses with almost a lulling effect. The bitter, wintry day seemed far distant, and he stood as if held in spell by the luxuriously heated air and exotic smells. Sandalwoods and spices, the rich pungence of roasted coffee and dry musty tea from Sumatra and the Orient swirled headily about him. For a moment he savored this wondrous change from the roaring blustery streets, and then he shook himself ever so slightly as though returning to thoughts less romantic and more earthbound. He stamped his soaked boots on the floor of the broad foyer leading off the corridor of offices and brushed at the flakes of snow already melting on his greatcoat. Then he carefully turned down its frayed velvet collar, smoothing the edges with an effort toward making an appearance, and set himself to approach the door of the first business concern at the head of the corridor. His task had begun.

HE HAD almost gone through the entire building, calling in at each office on each of the four floors, asking the same question and receiving the same answer, and meeting with no success, when he finally found himself with but one door to knock upon. The stairs had tired him, and his appearance seemed even shabbier and more pitiable because of it. He looked smaller and somehow more shrunken, and his breath was coming a little hard from the exertion of the stairs. His eyes, however, were enough to reassure anyone who would doubt his determination. They carried the whole of his drawn, tired face.

After reading the lettering on the door of the last office, he knocked discreetly and entered. The door was marked: *NATHANIEL COLDRING, Exports & Imports.* He found himself in a bare, sparsely furnished anteroom fenced by a low rail. A small reception desk was placed near a swinging gate at the far side. Beyond was a large open workroom with a series of partitioned cubbyholes opposing a long wall shelved to the ceiling with vari-colored ledgers and heavy bound volumes. In the center of the room was a double row of high clerk's benches and stools, only three of which were presently occupied.

The heavy air of the room was somnolent with late afternoon drowse, and one felt that a good number of employees had already been granted leave to depart for the warmth of their homes and dinner by the fireside on such an evening.

"Yes? What do you want?"

An office boy slumped at the desk by the rail stopped cracking nuts long enough to survey contemptuously the shabby, middle-aged caller. His small sharp black eyes, set in a pasty face, darted quickly over each poor detail of the other's garb. He felt required to add, "If it's charities, you'd best not waste your time. Christmas is past a fortnight."

The little man ignored the remark. His answer was spoken in a tired but determined voice.

"I'd like to see Mr. Nathaniel Coldring, please."

The sharp faced boy straightened a little at his tone.

"What'd you want?" he repeated sullenly, warily eyeing the visitor.

"I'll explain that to Mr. Coldring himself when I see him."

"What's the name?"

"No name."

At this the boy retreated and, after a moment, returned with the managing clerk. This official looked down his nose at the shabby visitor and then said coldly, "Mr. Coldring couldn't possibly be disturbed. Good afternoon."

As he turned, the small tired man spoke quickly, almost desperately.

"I must see him," he said.

The managing clerk paused in annoyance, held by something in the man's voice.

"For one thing," he snapped briefly, "he's out."

"Then I'll wait."

"See here. What's all this about—who are you?"

"I'm afraid I must hold such information for Mr. Coldring's ears."

"Ah!" The managing clerk became uncertain. He screwed up one eye at the ill-clad visitor.

"It's of the greatest importance," the little man said hurriedly, pushing his advantage.

There was a long pause while the pasty-faced boy stared vacuously, his mouth slack, and the older man regarded the speaker with wary suspicion.

"Hm-mm. Well—wait here."

He made his way through the long open room and disappeared off to the left somewhere in the rear. There was a silence as the boy went back to cracking nuts whilst keeping a continuing eye on the caller. In the main room the clerks who had raised their heads now returned to their work.

The managing clerk was back in a moment.

"Follow me." He jerked his head at the little man and led the way to the rear. "Here," he said curtly, and stood aside from a large open door. "You may enter. Mr. Coldring will see you." As the little man crossed the threshold, the managing clerk mustered the suggestion of a smile and called out, "Your visitor, Mr. Coldring." Then he closed the door.

The small man found himself in a spacious room furnished richly and yet with a taste directed toward informality and comfort. There were wide deep chairs, and a divan and coffee table. Walnut and ebony end tables scattered the room, holding a profusion of rare jade and ivory carvings. The polished oak floor was covered with two huge Persian rugs that sank under the feet like new moss, and the walls held costly hand-woven tapestries and a strangely odd collection of trophies and souvenirs from distant parts of the world. A large fireplace burned cheerily and cast dancing shadows against the failing light. A man stood with his back to it, surveying his visitor.

"Mr. Nathaniel Coldring?" the little man inquired of him hesitantly.

"Your servant, sir," came the pleasant rejoinder. It was a mellow voice and a brisk one, too. It came from a man in his late forties or, perhaps, a shade over fifty. Medium height yet large, his body was firm and well-fleshed. His blue eyes held a twinkle and a suggestion of shrewdness, and his cheeks were ruddily healthful, telling a story of good foods and liquors and endless days in the open with attendant vigorous exercise. Silver-haired more than black, and comfortably paunchy, Mr. Nathaniel Coldring nevertheless presented a fine figure and did credit to a man bordering two score and ten.

The little man swallowed hard and his eyes searched the other's face.

"I wish to speak to you on a very important matter," he said.

"So!" Nathaniel Coldring's bushy eyebrows went up in mild amusement. He watched his visitor with impartial interest, never stirring from his position before the fire. Comfortably, he rocked on his heels on the hearth.

"I—I am in need of thirty dollars, sir," the little man said.

"Ah." Nathaniel Coldring gave a surprised grunt. Then he clucked his tongue. "'Fraid it's out of my line, sir. Yup, out of my line. We don't do any of that 'round here 'cept Christmas hols." He spoke with good nature but firmly.

The small man swallowed again and set his jaw.

"You don't understand," he said. "Please let me explain."

Again the clucking, this time accompanied by a sober shaking of the head.

"Can't be done. My sympathy."

Mr. Coldring's cheerful impatience whilst pursuing the richly rewarding course of his life had created for him the habit of speaking in clipped, monosyllabic phrases.

"Please—you don't understand," the little man said again. His eyes pleaded with the robust man before him. "I wish no charity. Do listen, I beg of you, sir. Only five minutes of your time."

Nathaniel Coldring casually extracted a large gold timepiece from his velvet waistcoat.

"Five's good," he said, springing open the cover and regarding the exposed watch-face.

HE STOOD just so, watching the hands of the timepiece and rocking comfortably on his heels as his visitor nervously perched himself on the edge of a chair and began to repeat the address he had made so many times that day. He spoke hurriedly, as if to cover a certain timidity and self-consciousness.

"I seek no charity, sir. I am no beggar. I am in need of thirty dollars and wish to offer you my services in any capacity from now until the same hour tomorrow afternoon in return for that sum."

A short silence was finally broken by Mr. Coldring's voice.

"Thirty dollars a day," he mused, staring down at his watch and rocking on his heels. "Ratio, one-eighty a week. Hm-mm. High value, sir." He suddenly cocked a measuring blue eye at his visitor as though he'd missed something in his appraisal.

"I put no restriction whatever on the service to be rendered you," the little man said. "All I want is to earn the sum I mention by tomorrow afternoon. The fact is, sir, I'm out of position temporarily, and I am bound to a certain obligation."

"All that's very nice, I'm sure," said Mr. Coldring, waving one hand and regarding his watch, "but not to the point, eh?" He pulled at his nose. "'Fraid I can't put anything your way."

Stubbornness and determination settled on the little man's slight shoulders.

"There's *nothing* you'd like done? I know surely that somewhere is somebody who wants a dirty job done. *Anything.*"

Nathaniel Coldring stared at him. Then his mouth quirked.

"'Sposin' I asked you to look in on the museum and pick me up a certain painting I fancy?" He laughed.

"I'd do it." The little man looked back at him steadily.

The two men stared at each other, Nathaniel Coldring with a slight smile of disbelief playing at the corners of his mouth. Then slowly and deliberately he snapped his watch shut. It made a loud sound in the silence. The larger man stood motionless, surveying his visitor. Finally he spoke thoughtfully.

"Yes, I believe you would," he said.

Nathaniel Coldring slowly moved from the hearth to one of the tall windows overlooking South Street and the river. "I believe you would," he repeated softly. He remained standing there gazing out for at least five minutes without speaking, while the little man regarded his back. When finally he turned, the dim light in the room did not permit notice of his expression, one which quickly erased itself as he crossed to resume his stance by the fire. It had been a compound of secret delight and suppressed, uproarious laughter. Now, as he faced his visitor, his ruddy features were quite composed. There was, however, still a slight twinkle in his blue eyes.

"I have a job," he said.

The little man visibly relaxed. Tension seemed to pour out of his body as he sat back in his chair and smiled for the first time.

Nathaniel Coldring wagged his head soberly as though to caution against too much expectation.

"Needs the right man, though," he said. "Rather difficult. Ticklish, too, y' might say."

The little man kept smiling.

"I'm your man," he said evenly.

"Perhaps. You've got the will, right enough." Mr. Coldring searched the other's face. "O' course, you'd have to put aside your private morals, if you've got any, in my interests."

"Of course."

"Hm-mm. Your name, sir?"

"Does it matter?"

"No, since y'won't get the thirty dollars till you've earned it, anyways." Mr. Coldring cleared his throat briskly and squarely faced the little man. "Now, sir, follow closely. This—" he waved an arm at the rich office about him—"was left me by my father. I enjoyed its very considerable fruits a dozen years. All mine, I thought. But I am informed that I'm to halve this tidy business with another." Nathaniel Coldring scowled down at his listener. "Cousin of mine. He's turned up an agreement. Claims it's a document in my father's signature . . . settlement of some old family debt. Allots this cousin a half share. Bit of a knock in the eye, eh? And he intends going to law to see he gets his due. Miserly, stubborn, crooked-tempered sort. Now, if I caught

hold of that document . . ." He trailed his words, studying the other somewhat speculatively.

The little man crossed to Nathaniel Coldring's desk and availed himself of ink and paper. "Name and address of the gentleman, please?" he inquired briskly. He waited with quill poised.

"My cousin?" Mr. Coldring seemed to be absently mulling something in his mind, while his eye followed with mild surprise the immediately alert and business-like attitude of the other. "Eh, yes. Surname same's mine. Relation's on the paternal side. First name is Roger. Address: Bank Street, 12, this city. Comfortable enough place, too. Thinking of going there?"

The small man nodded.

"He's alone tonight, I can tell you if it will help," said Mr. Coldring, staring at the ceiling and thoughtfully pulling his nose. "Family's away visiting for the week's end. He's to join 'em on the morrow, I believe. Just a cook person left. Cares for him. But she's deaf and old."

The little man eyed Nathaniel Coldring's robust figure with a measuring glance.

"How big would your cousin be, sir? As big as yourself?"

Mr. Coldring smiled with a slight sense of flattery.

"Much my figger, yes," he replied. "A little older. Bit of a freak, perhaps." He seemed to be amused at describing his cousin. "On the whole, though, a strong family likeness."

The little man straightened from scratching a series of rapid notes and folded the paper away inside his coat. He nodded briefly at Mr. Coldring.

"Good day, sir," he said. "I shall be looking in tomorrow."

"So?" Nathaniel Coldring looked at him with some amusement. He obviously was impressed with the other's brisk manner and lack of dawdling indecision. Then, after a moment, he asked, "Are you much at Indian wrestling?"

"Unfortunately no."

"Can you lay a pistol or handle a knife?"

"No, sir."

A shade of relief seemed to flicker over Nathaniel Coldring's face.

"Can't tell you where my cousin keeps this document," he stated.

"It doesn't matter." The little man moved toward the door.

"One moment," Mr. Coldring said. "A point to consider." He stared hard at the other. "Should you fail—caught in the act, so to speak—are you prepared to take the consequences? Might be complications, y'know. Bailiff's men, that sort of thing. Depending on how you go about it, o' course."

"I'll stand any consequences," the little man affirmed quietly.

"You wouldn't feel inclined to give me away to clear yourself?"

The little man smiled.

"I believe there exists a certain code of honor amongst thieves, isn't that so, sir?" His eyes crinkled humorously. "I'll follow the code."

Mr. Nathaniel Coldring stared with open-mouthed astonishment at the sly thrust as the little man made his exit. Then he touched a bell on his desk.

The managing clerk appeared.

"Show that man in directly he comes tomorrow," Mr. Coldring told him. "Mind you—directly!"

"Y-yes, sir." The managing clerk swallowed nervously and retired. He had misjudged the importance of the shabby visitor.

Nathaniel Coldring crossed to his fire and stared reflectively into it for a long time.

THE little man walked slowly down the stairs and out into the blustering, sleet ridden street, his mind evidently concentrating on the evening ahead to judge from his furrowed brow. He wandered criss-cross several blocks away from the waterfront, still thinking, then turned into the cheery warmth of a tavern. He ordered a mug of scald and took himself to an inconspicuous corner. The voices, smoke and noise about him scarce touched his reverie, though occasionally, his eyes would raise in distracted annoyance at some particularly raucous outburst of laughter or scuffling movement amongst the roughly assorted clientele of the establishment. Anon, reaching some decision, no doubt inspired by the temporary comfort

and warmth of the hot rum in his belly, and the great roaring fire in the long, oak-beamed room, he arose, and bundling himself carefully, left the tavern and directed his steps to Park Row. Arriving there, he searched along until he found a small print shop, and entered.

"I am interested in ordering some cards of business," he said to a bent, bald man with steel-rimmed spectacles. The man was leaning over busily searching the litter of a long table near the door. "Would you have some samples?"

The man nodded his head absently at the opposite wall which was covered profusely with tackings of every description and size of printed matter.

"Ye'll find 'un," he grunted matter-of-factly, and continued poking and thrusting amongst his papers.

The little man stepped to the wall and slowly scanned it for what he wanted. At length, his eye was arrested by a small, neat sample of engraved card. It read:

*MESSRS. JOSEPH & LEVY*
*Solicitors*
*27 William Street*
*New York City*

He looked over his shoulder. The printer had left his desk and was rooting among some bales of paper to the rear. The little man made a quick motion and removed the card from where it was tucked in back of a large property sale notice and placed it in his pocket. Then he walked to the door of the shop. "Good day to you, sir," he called, tipping his beaver. The printer only glanced up, grumbling, and his visitor left the shop.

It was now quite dark, and the little man stood a moment in seeming indecision in the wintry street. All about him people hurried past, bending into the driving sleet, intent only on quickly gaining the warmth and comfort of their homes. A squat, round man in high beaver, and bundled to his cherry red tip of a nose, brushed busily past him, his arms loaded with bundles, and almost knocking him down. Two small boys darted past shrieking, throwing snow. It obviously startled him for he jerked back quickly and bit his lip as though vexed with his own nervousness. Then, after a moment more of watching the hurrying people, he grinned sardonically, stepped away from the printer's shop and settled himself once more against the night and the snow.

It past eight o'clock when the little man turned into Bank Street. The wind had abated somewhat, and now the snow fell in fat lazy flakes. Slowly he searched the numbers of the houses in the meager light of the sparsely placed street lamps, the snow underfoot cushioning his steps to silent movement. He seemed inflicted with a sense of guilty stealth from the way he walked and kept looking about him. His feet slowed, apparently less willing the further along he went. Then suddenly he stopped. He was opposite No. 12, the residence of Roger Coldring.

For a long time the little man stared at the large, imposing house with its heavily draped windows, then he drew a deep breath, squared his slight shoulders, and passed through the wrought-iron gate.

"Yes?" a voice inquired suspiciously in answer to his pull of the bell. The door had opened a few cautious inches and held. The head of an elderly female in servant's attire peered out through the crack.

"Mr. Roger Coldring, please," the little man said. He wondered how his voice could possibly sound steady.

"Eh?" The old servant cupped her ear.

Of course, he thought. Coldring said she'd be somewhat deaf.

"Mr. Roger Coldring, please," he fairly shouted. "I'm calling on Mr. Roger Coldring."

"Eh? Not so loud then," she said sharply. "What be your name?"

Feeling better now that his blood was up, the little man produced the card of Messrs. Joseph & Levy. Bony fingers snatched it back through the crack and then, in a moment, the door swung grudgingly open. He stepped in.

"Wait here." And she left him to carry the card to her master.

The small man looked about him. The spacious hall betokened luxury and comfort throughout the rest of the house. Its fine parqueted floor, winding staircase, and exquisite chandelier spoke a life and manner far removed from anything he had known. He stared at his surroundings

with a slightly bitter envy tinged with admiration. And, annoyingly enough, he suddenly became extremely aware of his own shabbiness. He felt like some seedy cadger, or an unwanted tradesman arriving at the wrong entrance.

He removed his greatcoat which was in considerably poorer shape than the rest of his attire, and it made him feel better.

After a few minutes, the elderly maid-servant returned.

"You may come along now," she said. "Mr. Coldring will see you in the library. And don't be lifting your voice to him as you did me."

She abruptly led the way to the rear of the hall darkened and quiet enough to give the impression of a house totally deserted. The little man could still clearly hear the slow methodical tick of the large clock in the foyer. He could feel his heart pounding, and the dryness in his throat became unbearable. His feet felt weighted, and he moved them with effort.

"In here." And the elderly maid left him standing alone on the threshold of the library.

"Come in, sir. Come in," a sharp, somewhat querulous voice said impatiently.

The little man braced himself inwardly, permitting himself the split-second thought that now it was much too late for anything but decisive and successful action if he was not to wind up facing a magistrate and prison.

He stepped firmly forward to an elderly man seated in a high wing-backed chair with a book open in his lap and a handsome silver-headed malacca cane by his side. The dim, cavernous room was lit only by the large brass oil reading lamp on the table beside the seated figure. The business card of Messrs. Joseph & Levy lay on the table propped against the base of the lamp.

"Good evening, sir." The little man fought for an air of quiet assurance. "I have the honor to represent the firm of Joseph & Levy, Solicitors."

"So your card tells me, sir. And of what concern is it to me?"

An irascible, drawn featured man well past fifty glared impatiently up through thick-lensed gold pince-nez at the late caller.

THE little man looked back at him with quiet firm gaze and bowed cordially. He saw Mr. Nathaniel Coldring's cousin to be indeed much the same in build and general resemblance, but the likeness died quickly with Roger Coldring's thin, unkempt hair and aging, sunken cheeks. His mouth was a mean small line puckered at its edges and he had no teeth.

"Well, sir—speak up!" Roger Coldring demanded in a rude, grating tone. "To what am I indebted for such an untimely visit?"

"I beg your pardon for the hour," the little man said. "The matter would not rest."

"Again, I repeat—what is that matter, sir?"

"You are—that is, I presume I am addressing Mr. Roger Coldring?"

"Yes-yes. Get on with it."

"Your cousin, Mr. Nathaniel Coldring has placed a certain lamentable matter of family dispute in our hands. My firm has undertaken settlement. I am here to effect the preliminary preparations." The little man began to feel better now that he could hear himself speaking in even, confident tones.

Mr. Coldring stirred in his comfortable velvet smoking jacket and peered suddenly at the little man.

"Why? Joseph & Levy are not his regular solicitors," he stated suspiciously.

There was a fractional pause and the visitor ran glibly on.

"Permit me to say, sir, that that is a matter we really cannot pass any opinion on. The only thing of concern to us is that we have been entrusted by Mr. Nathaniel Coldring with the matter of adjusting your claim to a half share in his father's estate. We understand that you possess a document relating to such provision, which purports to be signed by the late Mr. Coldring."

Roger Coldring angrily fumbled with the pince-nez, adjusting them the better on his nose to peer more closely at his visitor.

"That is true, sir. And I am still waiting to find out why it is the concern of your firm." Suddenly he leaned forward and asked sharply, "Why do Joseph & Levy choose such an hour for your call?"

The little man was ready. He smiled in quiet apology.

"Well, sir, I am to express our apologies, but Mr. Nathaniel Coldring is responsible for that. We have been in a great rush of business of late, and he came round just before closing and said he wished particularly for the matter to be broached before he leaves town on an urgent business call."

"Hah!" Mr. Coldring's exclamation seemed one of doubt combined with displeasure. He leaned back in his chair and sharply surveyed his visitor. Then he leaned forward again. "And what did my honorable cousin propose to your firm?"

"That we attempt to reach an amicable settlement with you—if you do, in truth, possess such a document. Our client has no wish to be at odds with his family. He is a fair man, and will make a fair settlement."

"Hah!"

"Do you have the document?"

"I do."

"May I see it?"

There was a long pause as the two men looked at each other. A small fire at the other side of the room crackled and snapped audibly. It cast dancing, vague shadows throughout the room.

"Why not?" Roger Coldring said finally.

"A routine request. Naturally, you understand we must first—"

Mr. Coldring slowly got up and brushed past him, rudely cutting him off in the middle of his speech. He crossed to the mantel of the fireplace and pushed a small picture aside that hung on the wall above. A panel opened at some movement of his finger. He reached in and withdrew a bundle of papers from which he selected a long envelope. He returned to his chair and seated himself, tapping the envelope against his fingers. The small man had perched on the end of a straight chair. At sight of the document so close to his grasp, he felt himself trembling, and the blood going hot and cold in his veins. He fought to keep the bursting excitement out of his voice and the tremble from his hand as he reached out and spoke.

"If you please, sir," he said.

Roger Coldring regarded him through narrowed eyes, continuing to hold the document. He seemed to be appraising his visitor, weighing him. The little man felt a fine sweat begin to spring from his body. The room suddenly became close and unbearable.

Quite abruptly, Mr. Coldring opened the envelope, withdrew a folded sheet of paper and spread it on the table beneath the oil lamp. His fingers rested lightly on it, yet retained firm possession. The prize was carefully guarded.

"There you are, sir," Mr. Coldring said. "A rather worthy document."

The little man bent forward with a stolid face to examine the agreement. It was written on a sheet of foolscap that was old and creased and dated some fifteen years back. Undoubtedly it was authentic.

And at the bottom it carried the signature of the elder Mr. Coldring, now deceased.

The little man took a slow, quiet breath.

"Could you let me have this to show my firm?" he inquired blandly. "We would return it tomorrow."

"Hardly." The other's eyebrows arched derisively and he chuckled. He calmly refolded the document and placed it back in its envelope. "You spoke of settlement, sir," he stated with flat inquiry.

"It was necessary that I first see the document and report on its authenticity."

"That you have, and that you will, eh?" Roger Coldring chuckled thinly with satisfaction.

"Quite so."

"Then, sir, you'll permit me to bid you good-night. You need no longer encroach upon what is usually my hour of comfort and solitude." He arose, his fingers curling tightly about the envelope. "You may advise your firm that when they are ready to discuss final settlement, in the name of my cousin, I will be most happy to see them. Next time, however, the door will be closed to them after five in the evening. Good-night."

HE REACHED for the bell pull on the wall behind. The little man quickly checked his hand. "Don't trouble your servant, sir," he said. "When I go, I can let myself out. Permit me—I should like to trespass a trifle longer on your time. Messrs. Joseph & Levy did empower me

to make certain advances at my discretion."

"Ah, so?" Roger Coldring's eyes glittered fractionally.

"Yes. May I sit down?"

"By all means." Mr. Coldring's demeanor took on an amazing change. He swung a chair for his visitor, then crossed in limping gait, leaning heavily on his malacca, to a sideboard and returned with glasses and a decanter. "Allow me to offer you an excellent port, sir. Just off the Lisbon packet a week today. Superb. Most superb, sir."

The little man smiled.

"Thank you, no," he said.

The other was a little taken aback by his refusal.

"Brandy, perhaps?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"A liqueur, then. You prefer a curaçao, or a taste of fine Danish cherry?"

"Nothing."

"You don't drink?" Mr. Coldring showed impatient amazement for one who would refuse a gratis offer of such fine liquors.

"I do on occasion, Mr. Coldring," the little man said quietly. "In any event, I never do until my business day is done."

"Ah!" Mr. Coldring became a trifle brittle and offended. "There are some moments, sir, when a little mutual conviviality is not amiss."

"Quite true."

"Then you do not consider this one of them?"

"Quite so."

"Har-rrmph!"

"Please do not allow me to spoil the enjoyment of your port, sir." The little man's eyes watched the envelope in the other's hand. Mr. Roger Coldring suddenly flicked it and stared straight at him as though divining his thoughts.

"I could have let you taken this as you wished," he said smiling slyly. "You see, I have a duplicate copy."

If the floor had suddenly fallen away from beneath him, the little man could not have been more shocked or surprised.

"A duplicate, sir?" he finally managed.

"Yes," Roger Coldring answered with a thin smile of self-satisfaction. He sipped at his port, peering happily over the rim of his glass at his visitor. "I am a very cautious man, sir—a very cautious man. You may inform your firm of that fact."

"And the copy?"

"At a friend's. Naturally, I would not keep it under the same roof."

The little man's heart sickened and died. He felt almost like a child with candy snatched from its grasp. However, if he was baffled or beaten by this sudden catastrophic turn it did not show in the careful modulation of his voice.

"The name of the gentleman and his address, please?" he asked. "We may need it for reference bye and bye. I assure you, sir, that Messrs. Joseph & Levy are as thorough as you are cautious."

"I can see that, sir. And well it is, too. I fancy dealing with proper business people." Roger Coldring's manner had thawed somewhat at his sense of superior position in the situation. The port, too, was tawny and mellow. "Matter of fact, sir, my friend lives hard by in this very same street. No. 6, Bank. His name is Maxwell Ullman, Esquire."

The other's brain worked furiously. Undoubtedly he was faced with the need of securing the unexpected duplicate document this very same night if he was to achieve success at all. The odds had doubled dangerously. So be it. He pressed his lips together grimly. It was late. He'd have to work quickly.

Roger Coldring's voice cut into his thoughts.

"Before we continue with your firm's representations, perhaps you'd like to hear a proposal come to my mind since your arrival."

"I would."

"Look, then. I judge you to be a man who can appreciate the worth of a tidy sum in hand. Supposin' I were to offer you five hundred dollars to come over to my side unbeknownst to your firm or my worthy cousin?" Roger Coldring shrewdly regarded his visitor.

"I'd not do it," the little man said.

"You're too hasty, sir. Too hasty. I haven't explained the matter."

"It would be of little use. I still would refuse you."

"You'd refuse five hundred dollars gained at little cost!" Mr. Coldring was incredulous and exasperated.

The little man looked back at him quiet-

ly, and with a certain dignity of stubbornness.

"I am interested only in carrying out my orders as per the mattter of your cousin Nathaniel," he said.

The other threw up his hands and came to his feet. His aging, sunken face was twisted with vexed impatience and disgust. His eyes looked abnormally blue and popping, enlarged as they were by the thick lenses in his glasses.

"Enough, sir," he rasped harshly. "I'll not spend the night twittering idly with a fool. You may see me again only when your firm is ready to make definite settlement in this affair. Good-night!"

It was then that the little man made his move. As his quarry raised up from his chair and fumbled for his cane, he suddenly lunged forward, securing the silver-knobbed malacca ahead of the other's grasp. Before Roger Coldring could wipe the expression of stunned amazement and shock from his face, the little man had pushed him back off balance and brought up the cane to strike him a hard, sharp blow on the side of the head. Roger Coldring abruptly stopped his ludicrous, helpless floundering in the armchair and slumped forward unconscious.

His attacker started back, staring down at the motionless body of his host and giving a half hysterical little moan. Sweat covered his brow, and he breathed hard and in jerky sobs.

The house was silent. Nothing stirred. The only sounds came from the fire in the grate.

Finally, though actually it was only a matter of seconds, the little man broke from his paralysis of shocked disbelief at what he had done, and began hurriedly to complete the task. He clumsily dragged Roger Coldring's body to a darkened corner and then set about binding him with the silken cord of his smoking jacket and the long rich folds of his fine cravat. The victim was just beginning to stir when the little man finished the last knot. After a moment's hesitation, he lightly stuffed his host's handkerchief to his mouth, tying the ends behind. Then he found a pillow and placed it under the prostrate man's head.

Suddenly the little man froze, listening. But it was only the clock in the hall striking the hour. He strained his ears, his body tensed for other sounds. The flicker of the dying fire wavered over his face making it unreal and wraithlike. But nothing stirred. The silence was filled with dark shadows and orange light lapping gently back and forth across the room. The house slept.

Quickly now, he retrieved the precious document from where it had fallen from Roger Coldring's grasp, and slipped it inside his coat. Then he rapidly tidied the armchair and table, picked up and pocketed the card of Messrs. Joseph & Levy, and snuffed out the reading lamp. Taking his host's silver-headed malacca in hand, he moved to the door of the library and paused to listen. Still no sound. He tiptoed stealthily down the hall and let himself out of the house.

IN THE street, he drew breath and uneasily looked about him. The night was quiet and clear, and the snow had stopped. No figure stirred abroad though it was still a fairly reasonable hour. The little man remembered the hall clock and reckoned it to be close after ten. He would have to hurry.

No. 6 Bank Street was no distance, and in a few moments he stood at the door of Maxwell Ullman, Esq., possessor of the copy document. A light still burned in the drawing room.

"Yes?" A manservant in livery answered his ring.

The little man withdrew the card of Messrs. Joseph & Levy, Solicitors from his pocket.

"Please be kind enough to present this to your master," he said. His voice seemed to have gained firmness and authority. "I wish to speak with him at once on an urgent matter."

"Mr. Ullman is about to retire. He expects no one, and will not be disturbed." The servant held out the card and began to close the door.

The little man casually slid the tip of Roger Coldring's malacca between the hinges and jammed the door. He fixed the servant with a steady look. His quiet voice held an edge.

"You'll do as I say," he ordered, "or suffer the consequences. Your master will not thank you for turning me away. Tell

him the matter relates most importantly to his good friend Roger Coldring."

The servant hesitated a moment, but gave way as the little man withdrew his stick from the door and stepped forward with a confident, superior air. He passed through the entrance and stood waiting in the hall, tapping his elegant malacca with light impatience.

The servant mumbled something uncertainly and then closed the door, and hurriedly made off through one of the front rooms. The little man swallowed hard and removed his beaver. He grasped Roger Coldring's cane more firmly at the halfway and wiped the palm of his other hand against his greatcoat. His eyes rapidly flicked about him, sizing the place and unconsciously noting a scale of living comparable to his recent victim who now lay bound and gagged but a few doors away. A ghost of a smile tugged at the slight caller's lips. It imparted to him a faint enigmatic air of superior amusement. In fact, the little man's whole bearing seemed to have undergone a subtle change. His former tired, almost pathetic determination had now acquired an edge. His assurance seemed no longer forced. It had hardened and taken on a hint of formidability.

"Ah, sir! There you are! What's amiss, sir?"

It was Maxwell Ullman, Esq. moving rapidly into the hall ahead of his servant. Portly, florid, and with a nervous excitable manner, the plump middle aged man appeared one to live in constant distress over the usual vagaries to be encountered in daily life. Had he not been born a male, he could perhaps be termed a fussed, apprehensive spinster in his ways.

"Maxwell Ullman, Esquire?" the little man inquired, bowing slightly in the other's direction.

"Yes. Yes, of course, sir!" the short, stoutish man answered with nervous rapidity. His high color seemed to turn almost scarlet even as he spoke, as though a too rapid stream of words was ever filling his throat and choking him. "Maxwell Ullman at your service, sir. Who are you? What has happened to my friend, sir? Surely a call at such an hour— My servant said you were most insistent, sir. Please be informed that—"

"You have my pardon for the hour, sir," the little man cut in. He gravely fixed the other's eye. "Be assured, sir, that this most untimely visit was not of my insistence, but rather that of Mr. Roger Coldring whose good offices I represent."

"Yes. Yes, of course. I know. I understand. Believe me, there was no intention of offense, sir. It is merely that I am concerned. I—"

Again the little man cut in.

"Allow me to set your mind at ease, Mr. Ullman. The matter of my call does not concern the health of your good friend. In truth, I left Roger Coldring only a few minutes past in a most complete state of calm and utter relaxation. However—"

"Yes, yes. Speak!" Mr. Ullman's excitement threatened to transform him to the color of boiled lobster. His small, pudgy hands made aimless little circles in the air. "Roger can call upon me for anything, sir. Anything. Thank the Lord your mission does not bring me tidings of ill health. His liver, sir. Liver. Been extraordinarily poor this last year. Only on Wednesday last, he—"

"My call concerns a certain document, sir."

"Document? Document, sir? Bless me, I—"

"The matter is extremely confidential, sir. We could do without your servant."

The little man coolly directed his gaze at the manservant who had been standing quite close to his master all this time and listening to everything with ill-concealed curiosity.

"Oh!" said Mr. Ullman with a start. "Yes. Yes, of course. Matthew, you may go." He waved one pudgy hand. Matthew scowled and retired down the hall. His master turned back to the little man. "My want of courtesy is inexcusable, sir. I've kept you standing here with nary a thought for your comfort. Pray, let us retire to my drawing room and a glass of brandy. Terrible night. Terrible. Only this morning, I said to my—"

"Forgive me if I refuse your invitation, sir." The little man stood fast as the other prepared to lead the way from the foyer. "It is late, and I must be on my way." He slid his hand inside his greatcoat and withdrew the long white envelope

he had retrieved from the floor of Roger Coldring's library. He opened the envelope. "You see here, sir," he said, taking out the paper from within, "the original of a document entrusted to your care by my client Roger Coldring. I know not whether you are aware of the contents of this paper, but in any event, it pertains in part to a legacy bequeathed by his late uncle, deceased some dozen years. Your friend Roger has now the good fortune to be the recipient of an amicable wish on the part of his cousin Nathaniel to make fair settlement. The matter is being negotiated by the firm of Messrs. Joseph & Levy, Solicitors. And they now have need of this document," he gently waved the paper at Mr. Ullman, "and the copy in your possession. Could I have it, please?"

There was a momentary silence as the two men regarded each other. Mr. Ullman put out a tiny red tip of tongue to wet his lips. Clearly, he was beset by indecision.

"Roger did not speak of this to me today," he said nervously, almost apologetic. "I saw him only at noon on The Exchange. He—"

"The matter, unfortunately, did not reach a conclusive phase until early this evening, sir. I, myself, was closeted for some time with Nathaniel Coldering before visiting Roger. Now that the thing has been brought to a successful head it is Roger Coldring's wish to dispose settlement as quickly as possible."

"Roger told me when he placed what you seek in my care that under no circumstances was I to surrender it to anyone without his express permission."

"You have it, sir. I have only just left him in his library. He would himself have accompanied me here but for the late hour and the weather. Complained of his liver, sir."

"Yes, yes. Of course."

"And he retired, leaving me with this. He said it was far too valuable to be allowed to pass from his hands." The little man cocked his head a trifle sideways and very seriously regarded Maxwell Ullman, Esq. A very keen and close observer might have said that the smaller man, now posing casually and confidently with both his hands resting on his elegant malacca, was hard put to it to repress an outburst of glee. He narrowed his eyes to shade their merriment. He was filled with a sense of invincibility. "This document is Roger Coldring's personal voucher for my complete trustworthiness, sir. Perhaps you would care to step down the street with me and call upon him to clear any doubts in your mind. I can't say that I find fault with your caution. A most commendable attitude, sir."

"I thank you. Naturally, you understand. I mean, I . . ." The portly, rotund figure of Maxwell Ullman fidgeted with uncomfortable embarrassment. He obviously was not a man who liked to make decisions.

"Shall we step down the street to Mr. Coldring's house, sir?" The little man smiled in quiet tolerance of the other's doubt. "It is his express wish that this be attended to tonight, so you must forgive my insistence."

"No. No, of course not. There's no need to call upon him. Certainly at such an hour." Mr. Ullman looked down and read once more the card of Messrs. Joseph & Levy clutched in his hand. He pressed his lips together. "Only . . ."

"Only what, sir?"

Mr. Ullman raised his head and looked at his small visitor regarding him with a lightly questioning, candid gaze, much like a puzzled child. He swallowed. "Nothing, sir. Nothing." His voice suddenly became hearty with pleased decision. He threw an arm across the little man's shoulders. "You shall have the document, sir. Come into my sitting room whilst I fetch it, and then," he winked and chuckled, "I know you'll not refuse a stirrup cup before you take to the street again. I have an excellent Portuguese brandy, sir. Topping—topping! Just in from Europe on the Lisbon packet. Will you join me, sir?"

"I will, sir. Delighted, sir."

Ten minutes later, the little man stood on the walk outside the home of Maxwell Ullman, Esq. with the second document in his pocket. He briskly stepped off into the night whistling *Yankee Doodle* and twirling Roger Coldring's malacca.

THE following morning he presented himself at the offices of Nathaniel Coldring, Exports & Imports.

"Well, sir," the robust, affluent mer-

chant greeted him, "ye're early come. Too early for good news, I'll warrant." He teetered smugly and comfortably on his heels in his favorite position before the fire and surveyed the other with a lightly mocking expression. A well-brushed beaver cocked on the back of his head led one to believe that he had arrived but a moment ahead of his visitor and had not quite finished removing his outer garments.

The little man stared back at him with level gaze. His face was not quite the same tired, stubbornly determined face of yesterday. There was a certain set to his head and a faint suppressed sparkle of knowing superiority in his eyes.

Without a word, he drew forth the two documents from his shabby greatcoat and placed them in Nathaniel Coldring's hand.

"Eh, what's this, sir?" Mr. Coldring stared uncomprehendingly at the envelopes.

"The document you wished. It was in duplicate. Your cousin's no fool, sir. He'd entrusted a copy to a friend."

Nathaniel Coldring opened and closed his mouth in a helpless effort to speak. His amazement was complete. Quite evidently he had never expected to see the document in his possession.

"Two of 'em eh?" he finally breathed slowly. "And you came off with both!" His usual urbane assurance was completely shaken. He stared with frank astonishment at the other.

The little man nodded coolly.

"It was quite necessary, don't you think?" he said quietly.

Nathaniel Coldring gazed at him open-mouthed, and a smile began to pull at the corners of his lips. His eyes dropped from the steady imperturbable look of the other to glance unbelievingly at the envelopes in his hand and then up again. Then he threw back his head and burst into a delighted roar of laughter.

"Gad, y'ere a cool one," he sputtered. "'It was quite necessary, don't you think?'" he mimicked. Then suddenly and feverishly he tore open the envelopes and rapidly scanned the documents, moving his lips the while.

"If you'll pay me, I'll be getting along now," the little man said.

"'Od's life, I'll pay you! And pay you well," Nathaniel Coldring cried happily. He fumbled in his coat and withdrew a large billfold. "Here y'are, sir," he chortled. "Double the money!" He extracted some bills. "Double the money. Thirty dollars for each document, sir, and a job well done." He soundly thumped the little man on the back as he handed him the money.

The other hesitated a fraction regarding the sixty dollars.

"You don't have to do this. I'd bargained for thirty, no exceptions."

"Don't be a fool, man. Small measure to what ye've earned me. Small measure, indeed." Nathaniel Coldring turned and threw the documents into the fire. He faced back to the little man. "Tell me how it went. Was Roger hard? What of this other chap? Surely, ye've got a tale?"

"It wasn't too much. I was in good fortune for the most part." Quietly and simply, the little man told the story of the night before. When he recounted the part concerning Roger Coldring's offer of bribe the other stared at him in disbelieving amazement.

"Roger offered you five hundred dollars and you turned him down?"

"Certainly."

Nathaniel Coldring swore in dumbfounded admiration. Then he waved for the other to continue, and heard out the rest of his story. At the end, he threw back his head and once more burst into uproarious laughter. He had to hold his beaver tightly atop his head to keep it from falling off, and the violence of his amusement was such that it even threatened to dislodge the fine, gleaming alignment of his costly and skillfully executed dentures.

Abruptly he stopped laughing with a painful wince. His hand started to move up to the back of his head but he checked it. He darted a sharp look at the little man and hurriedly cleared his throat.

"Well, sir," he said quickly, watching the other to see if he had noticed anything untoward, "quite an experience, I must say."

"I shouldn't care to repeat it."

"A shrewd rascal, that Roger."

"I'd say so."

This seemed to threaten the other with a fit of delight again, but his brows knitted

painfully and once more he winced, choking off his merriment.

"You suffer a headache, sir?" the little man inquired solicitously.

"Really nothing." Nathaniel Coldring's eyes danced. "Had a bit more than I'd expected last evening." He coughed and cleared his throat ostentatiously under the little man's clear bland gaze. "Uh—bye the bye, it's none of my affair, I'm sure, but I'm interested to know why a man would need just thirty dollars to the penny. And take such chances to get it. Mind telling me?"

The little man shifted a trifle where he sat. It was the first instance he had shown anything like hesitancy or discomfort.

"Why no," he said finally. "I don't mind telling you since it's done and in my hand. It's really quite simple. My son arrives from Edinburgh today. He has just completed eight years of medical study. He is a surgeon, sir, and will commence practice here in New York." The little man's chin had come up proudly. "I've—I've not seen him in eight years," he said. "He's—all I have." His voice had trailed to a whisper. Nathaniel Coldring could barely hear his words.

A soft silence filled the room as the rich merchant regarded the little man now bent over in his chair staring down at nothingness. Several minutes passed and neither figure moved.

Finally the little man raised his head. He spoke evenly with a soft voice.

"On the ship with my son," he continued, "though he's not aware, sir, is a set of the finest surgical instruments that English sword steel and superior craft can fashion. I placed my order for them with a London firm the day he entered medical college." The little man smiled warmly up at Nathaniel Coldring. "I paid for them bit by bit through the years. Practically all that I could earn and save, for they were quite expensive." He gently waved the bills in his hand and smiled. "Half of this is my last payment. I fell behind when I was let out of my last position. My son's instruments were shipped on the promise of full settlement in the port of New York."

The little man got to his feet. "And now, sir, with your leave, I'll bid you good day. I've some preparations to make at my lodgings and, indeed, they'll be much the grander for your generosity."

"A moment, sir." Nathaniel Coldring cleared his throat as though he found speaking in his usual hearty fashion somewhat difficult. "I'd appreciate your looking in on me in a week or so. There's something I'd like to discuss with you."

"Something to discuss—with me?"

"Just so. A matter of position. Rather good, too, I may add. Will you call in?"

"But—of course! I'd be most happy!"

"Good!" Nathaniel Coldring clapped the little man on the back. "A week, then. And mind you watch that boy of yours and don't spoil him too much. Ye'll bring him round to dinner, too, later on. I've a catching fair bit of a niece, y'know."

FIVE minutes after the little man had made his departure, another visitor was announced. Maxwell Ullman, Esq.

"Well, Nathaniel, good morning to you," he said, bustling into the room. "Magnificent day, Nathaniel. Topping, I might say. Topping!" He paused in his chatter to suddenly take notice of the fact that all was not quite well with his friend, a man of usual robust health. "'Od's blood, Nathaniel! What ails you?"

Nathaniel Coldring was indeed not the same man of five minutes before. He had slumped into the chair behind his desk and put his head in his hands with a groan. He no longer wore his beaver, and it was plain to see that he bore a wound of some sort for his head held a small patch of bandage to the rear.

"Gad," he groaned. "A thousand devils are loose in my skull, Max. He not only cracked my pate last night, but he did it with my own cane." Suddenly Nathaniel Coldring sat bolt upright. "And, by God, he's still got it, come to think of it! My prize malacca!"

"A footpad and common thief, Nathaniel!" Maxwell Ullman stated in agitation. "I told you. How could you have taken such a risk, Nathaniel? What folly to wilfully place yourself at the mercy of a perfect stranger! I knew there would be violence! Have you set the authorities on him? Where is he now? Bless me, this is—"

"Stop it, Max," Nathaniel Coldring

growled. "Ye're hurtin' m'head the more with your old woman's fussing." He reached for a decanter and two glasses from a cut crystal set on his desk. "Here y'are, Max. Drink with me to the new manager of that trouble-ridden Cuban property you claim was a fool's investment. We'll get sugar aplenty from it from now on, and at a more than decent margin."

"You can't mean—"

"But I do. All that property needs is the right man on the spot to run it. A man who is determined, quick-witted, incorruptible and fearless." Nathaniel Coldring grinned at his old friend. Then he drawled in rich satisfaction, "A pretty tidy fit, eh Max?"

Maxwell Ullman, Esq. threw up his hands in despair.

"You're impossible, Nathaniel," he sputtered. "To concoct such a scheme and—why, how could you have known what might happen, what he'd be like? Look at you now! Supposing he'd discovered that it was you, not Roger; that there never was a Roger, or—"

"I took my chances, too, Max. I fancy myself a judge of character, and I liked him from the start." He stood up, happily pleased with himself. "Come. Enough prattle. Let's drink to 'im, Max, and a good man found."

Maxwell Ullman, Esq. uncertainly raised his glass.

"And his name, Nathaniel?" he asked.

"Why, I'm sorry, Max, but I don't really know the little person's name."

And Nathaniel Coldring winked happily over the rim of his glass.

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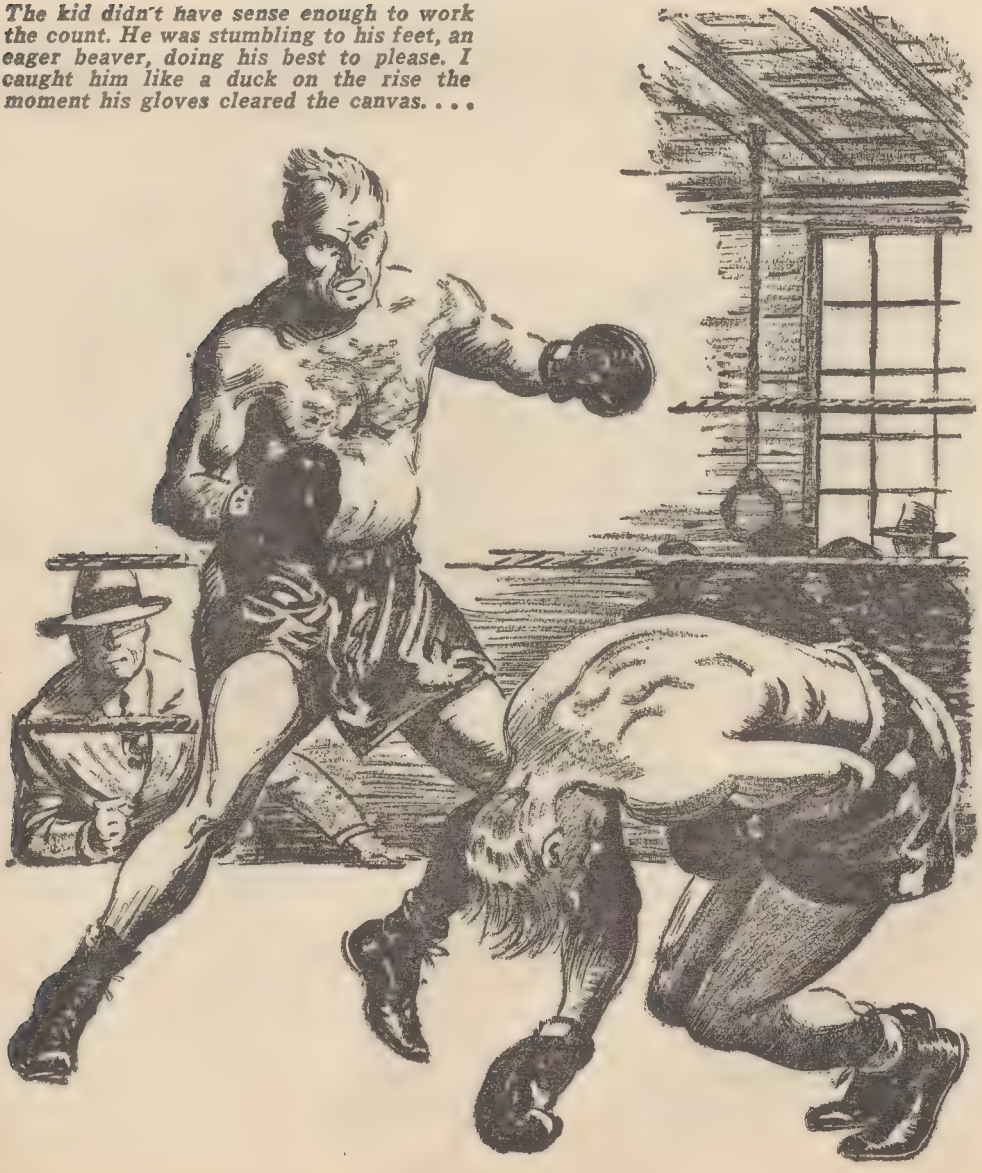
# PRELIMINARY BOUT

*The kid didn't have sense enough to work the count. He was stumbling to his feet, an eager beaver, doing his best to please. I caught him like a duck on the rise the moment his gloves cleared the canvas. . . .*



## By JOHN BENDER

I WAS working with one of the light bags, punching up a sweat to take some of the thickness off my middle, when the kid came over again. It didn't take any crystal ball to see what was on his mind; his eagerness stuck out like a tin ear on a doll.

His name was Danny Farrel, and I'd seen him around the gym on and off the past few weeks, pushing at the big bag or working in the ring. A middleweight. Old enough to keep out of trouble with the truant officer, but not much more. Blond, wide in the shoulders, bone-thin at the hips. Most of the young punks around the place were cocky and full of themselves but Danny wasn't. He wasn't wise and snippy. He was a serious-faced kid who wanted to find out all he could, and because I'd chewed the fat with him once or twice, I had him under my feet every time I came in, now.

When I gave the bag the final, double elbow, he grabbed my towel and handed it to me.

"Look," he said, "I don't want to be a pest, Mr. Packer. But, gee, just three or four rounds. What about it?"

I said, "The answer's still no. I don't want to fight you, see! I get all the exercise I want. You like to tangle with somebody, go ask Joe to find you a boy."

The gym was Joe Mullaney's place, and he ran it well enough for me, letting me work out whenever I wanted. Joe didn't

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH A. FARREN

press me for the dough I generally didn't have. Now and then he steered a handler's or a trainer's fee my way, which helped out plenty. But it didn't mean I had to play Dutch uncle to any of these kids who came in to use Joe's gym.

Danny frowned. "Gosh," he said, "Nealy's seen me work against most of these guys. But if he could see me go with somebody good, just once, I'm sure he'd handle me. All I got to do is show him—"

"That you can knock my block off." I had to grin at the flush it brought to the kid's cheeks. "So Nealy Grayson's gonna manage you?"

"Maybe," he said hopefully. "It's not all set. But he said he might gimme a look when he comes in this morning. And I thought . . ."

He let the sentence slide away, unfinished, because he saw that I knew what he thought. That he could slap an ex-champ into the can, to prove to Nealy Grayson that he was quite the lad with his fists.

I didn't admire the program he'd lined up for himself; I didn't agree with any of it. First, because I didn't think Danny Farrel could damage me any; and secondly, because I didn't think much of Nealy Grayson. Not a phony like him.

Rubbing myself dry, I thought somebody should have wised this wide-eyed youngster to the facts of life, where managers like Nealy Grayson were concerned. The two-bit shills who never take a punch or throw one but who count the long green when the bout is over and stuff it in their sock. They'll work you for a buck every time, whether you're ready or you're right, and in the end you'll be rolling on your heels on Queer Street, mooching for a dime. I'd seen enough of it. And there'd been a guy like Nealy in my corner, when I was throwing leather for a living. He spent a lot of my blood before I got out from under his thumb.

But I didn't get a chance to tell the kid anything, then. Nealy had come in and was headed, smiling, in our direction. Small and neatly dressed, he had survived three dozen fighters like the careful fox he was, his dark-skinned face unblemished, pampered by his barber's skill.

He winked at Danny. "Hello, champ," he said to me. "Gonna give the boy a workout? Yes, no? No, yes?"

"Just a couple of rounds, Mr. Packer," Danny pleaded.

Casually Nealy said, "Like to see the boy, Packy. There's a half in it for you. Couple heats, is all."

"You know where you can shove your dough, Grayson," I said, and started away from them without looking at Danny's face.

I heard Nealy say, "Forget it, kid. We'll get another bum."

And that was when I turned and grabbed him and lifted his two hundred dollar suit right off the ground, shaking the little conniver like a dog worrying a bone.

"Save your dough, Grayson," I said. I looked at Danny. "Get your gloves on."

IN THE ring, I didn't figure that it would take long to separate this decent kid from Nealy Grayson. It seemed simple enough. But that was before the windmill wearing mittens crawled in on me and rocked me off the ropes with a flurry of red gloves.

This Danny Farrel was no dope. He moved smoothly with the courage and the power of his youth; his right hand was tipped with dynamite and he rocked me twice more before I settled down.

He carried himself wisely, lightly on his toes, head buried behind the bulwark of his shoulders, his hands held close and high, ready to defend or whip out damagingly. Reaching with two stabbing rights that didn't tag him fully, I began to wonder. However much respect he'd had for me in the gym, he wasn't overawed in the ring. He dealt a snappy left lead, carrying the right hand carefully, looking for a chance to cross it. I drew the punch, sliding to let him fan the air, then I used the counterpunch that had been my trademark and skittered him away.

He didn't lose his smile. He weaved slightly, hiding the power of his gloves behind the racing feints and came to me some more. If I hadn't been busy as hell, it might have been beautiful to watch, the smooth-flowing explosions that drifted down from his sloping shoulders and burst upon his gloves. He had a natural puncher's throw, coupled with a sureness

of foot and a boxer's reflexes that come once in a lifetime. Ketchel had it, Louis had it. I'd had it, once, though it had been a studied thing, a practiced bit of knowledge that I had schooled myself to learn.

Bouncing off the ropes, I went in low, bullying, shooting for the mid-section. Then I came erect, butting with my head, roughing him, gloves and laces. I used the backhand, watching the surprise building in his face. When he tried to cover, I pumped him with an overhand right and stepped away to let him fall.

Somebody called time and Nealy took the kid back to his corner. From the other side of the ring, I watched him slapping the life back into Danny Farrel's face, and I grinned over at them when Nealy looked in my direction. He glowered, whispered something in Danny's ear, and sent his boy out again with a shove.

Danny was cautious, down on his heels, looking for a chance to shoot his punching power. I drew his lead, and worried him in the middle, faster punching than he'd ever seen. Fast enough to burn me out, if I had to go much more than a round. When his belly was a red welt, I took it upstairs, jabbing for his nose. The punches did no real damage, but the pain showed in his eyes and he flailed wildly in his fury, forgetting to relax and to use his natural skill. It was something he had not yet learned, and I used the few moments to tip him off balance into the ropes. There, I crowded him, spread him with a pair to the body and belted him to his hands and knees.

I looked at Nealy. His face was a mask of fury, watching Danny; he wasn't tapping the time out on the ring apron as he might have, to give his boy the signal to rest.

I grinned around my mouthpiece. The kid didn't have sense enough to work the count. He was stumbling to his feet, an eager beaver, doing his best to please. I caught him like a duck on the rise the moment his gloves cleared the canvas, pounding him along the soft, fuzzy lines of his cheeks. One leg went awry. Sprawling, he hung aloft, a balloon for me to puncture. I hit him and he spread into a soft lump at my feet. And that was that. End of lesson.

WHILE Nealy stood aside, I put Danny on a rubbing table, then set a bucket underneath him, just in case.

"Can you beat that," Nealy said, looking down at Danny. "Not a thing. The bum ain't got a thing! Just a tanker, a no-good little punk."

I hit him lightly, almost gently, to bring the fear into his ratty face, so that he could appreciate the next one, the Sunday punch I'd been saving for his kind for a long time. It was as sweet a right as I'd ever thrown.

From the rubbing table Danny whispered, "Wow!" then sucked his bruised lip in under his teeth. "What was that for?"

"For cabbageheads like you. Who let guys like that make suckers out of them. For jerks like me, who want to get even with the racket." It was quite a speech. I picked up my towel. "Look, kid, there are easier ways than this to pick up a buck, you know. Take a hint while you can."

He shook his head, smiling around the battered lips. "You sound like my old man. 'Get a job, an honest job for yourself. Stop hanging around with them bums . . .' So that—" he nodded at the bags of rags which was Nealy Grayson—"was a wrong one. One of the bums. But they ain't all bad in this game. What about big Joe? Or Tony Zale? What about yourself?"

He gave me no chance to look away. "I'm still a dumb kid. O.K. But I'll learn. I'll find someone who knows the ropes, who can give me a straight steer—"

Danny paused, the words hanging there between us. His eyes came up slowly, bright as the ringlights at your first fight.

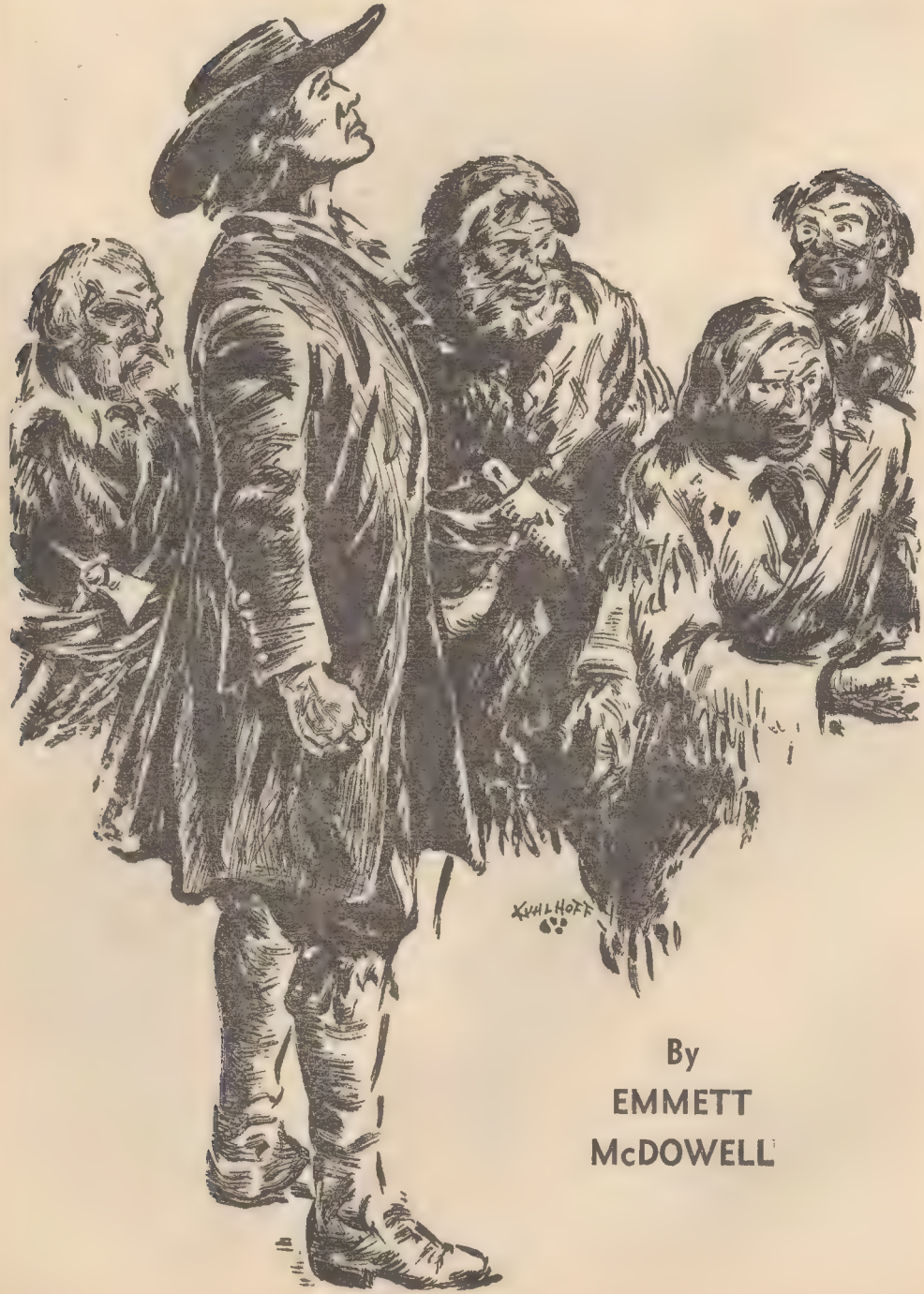
"Gosh, Mr. Packer," he said quickly, "why not? I bet you could manage me!"

And suddenly I thought, why not? Why the hell not me, instead of a heel like Nealy Grayson, who wouldn't know a really good boy if he came up and bit him in the head!

It was a warming thought. "Why not?" I said.

Then we were both grinning and I was wiping Danny's face with my towel and draping it over his sweating shoulders as we walked past Nealy Grayson and went down to the showers.

# MASTER THEE




By
EMMETT
McDOWELL

# AN' THOU

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

CALEB FRY had been born to the back country, but to the tamed and settled back country of Virginia. Not this savage Kentucky wilderness with its black, nigh-impenetrable forests, rolling barrens and green cane patches.

He moved cautiously, with no more noise than he could help, as he hastened along the trace which wound from Mud Garrison to the salt works some three miles to the west.

It was spring—fourth month to be exact. The woods were alive with yellow violets, dutchman's britches, blood-root. Also Indians, he didn't doubt. With no little relief, he emerged finally from the forest onto the cutover and eroded land about Bullitt's Lick.

Down toward the lower end, he could

*"Hold yourself better than the rest of us, d'you?" Dobbs roared. "Too good to fight!"*

make out the open air furnaces of the salt works spouting smoke like miniature volcanoes. Black iron kettles full of brine from the wells bubbled and steamed. A yoke of oxen stood patiently hitched to a drag of firewood. But there appeared to be no one about.

Kettle tenders and firemen, hunters, settlers, traders, all the rough ungodly folk who frequented the Licks, were not to be seen!

Before he could recover from the shock of the discovery, a faint yell lifted his eyes across the creek to the foot of Cahill's Knob. The missing salt makers were congregated amongst the cabins there. At this distance they reminded him of a swarm of gnats.

His blue eyes clouded, and he was half tempted to turn back. Such excitement amongst the rowdy folk at the Licks could only betoken trouble, and he had trouble enough already.

The whole of last night he had spent in walking the floor. 'Twasn't the first time since coming to the wilderness that he had felt the lack of Friends suitable for counsel. But along toward morning, it had come to him what he must do.

'Twas a hard decision. Once convinced of its rightness, though, he had set out resolutely for the salt works—a sober-faced, big-boned young man in severely plain, drab homespun of a cut seldom encountered on the frontier, the broad brim of his Quaker hat shading his eyes.

He was afoot, the Indians having run off all three of his horses a fortnight ago, which catastrophe he bore with an outward show of calm. But what he thought of the varmints privately would have shocked the Southriver Monthly Meeting, though he doubted it would have been any great surprise to them.

For Caleb had been disowned twice already. Once for being so carried away by passion as to whale the tar out of a Virginia militia colonel. The second time for using profane language and offering to fight. The offer hadn't been accepted. Caleb stood nigh six feet four inches in his bare feet, and his blue eyes could be disconcertingly bleak.

"Thee is too belligerent, Friend Caleb," old Micajah Lynch had told him dryly, "in upholding thy peaceable principles."

Indeed when Caleb had asked permission of the Monthly Meeting to take up wild lands in the Kentucky country, he had been given a Certificate of Removal with suspicious alacrity.

WHATEVER had drawn the men from their work had ceased to claim their attention, Caleb saw; for they were returning in groups to the Lick. He set his jaw—a stubborn jaw that had grown rock-like from overmuch setting—lifted his rifle, made directly for the cabins.

He was greeted with good-natured tolerance and certain grudging respect. For Caleb was a hard worker, always willing to lend a hand at a log rolling or house raising. A few yelled at him derisively. The saltmakers were an uncouth, brawling lot in their dirty leather breeches and linsey shirts, shaggy headed as buffalo. Despite a certain fondness and sense of responsibility for their Quaker, the idea of a man who wouldn't fight even to save his own hide, provoked their exasperation.

Caleb's back stiffened; an angry glint appeared in his blue eyes. But he managed to ignore the jibes, ran his eyes over the barefooted women and girls present for a glimpse of Jane Conklin. He and Jane had an understanding, which didn't add to his peace of mind either.

Jane wasn't of his persuasion, and if there had been any Friends in the Kentucky country, he would've been disowned a third time for planning to marry out. But since there were none, he must marry out or go wifeless. He was sincerely troubled, his conscience not always having proved itself a reliable guide in the past.

The girl wasn't amongst the crowd, though, which still milled yonder in front of Sander's Keep. He didn't know whether to be relieved or disappointed.

One thing was sure. She wouldn't approve of what he intended doing. Just as she didn't approve of his refusal to fight or to join in the boisterous frolics at weddings and house-warmings. He wondered sometimes why it was she had given her consent. 'Twasn't from any lack of suitors.

The press in front of Sander's Keep was thinning out. He was still a dozen yards off when he caught a glimpse of

the thing that had drawn everyone to the spot. He stopped and he could feel his stomach give a lurch.

'Twas a dead man. A naked, brown-skinned Indian sprawled face up on the hard-packed clay!

Some party of hunters must've murdered the savage in the woods, and brought in the carcass to brag on and laugh over. There was a ferocity about these people that filled Caleb with contempt.

He was staring fixedly at the body, when someone clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, if it ain't the Quaker!" a thick voice cried. "Master 'Thee an' Thou' himself. Indians scared you in, friend?"

Caleb saw it was Isaac Dobbs—a lean, sun-blackened deputy surveyor in a sumach dyed doeskin hunting shirt and fringed leggins, a shrewd, unscrupulous Virginian who was rapidly growing rich through land-jobbing. He didn't look forward to the encounter; for Dobbs never passed up a chance to plague him.

Dobbs' eyes were bloodshot and his breath smelled of liquor. He was accompanied by a short, thick-set, worried-looking man with a wrinkled red neck and gnarled hands.

"Satterly," Dobbs told his companion, "this creature looks like a man, talks like one, stands on its hind legs even. But don't let it fool you. It's a no-fight Quaker. What stumps me is how it ever strayed so far from the herd."

Caleb ignored him, studying Satterly. From what he had heard, the man had cause for that harried expression. Satterly had been tempted by the fertile bottoms of the Salt and the fact that the war with England was over, to settle his family on an exposed location downriver.

But the Indians, it had turned out, didn't consider the war over and had continued their raids unhampered by British officers. Satterly had been driven to pack up his family and move to the Licks. He was trying to sell his land now in order to return to Virginia, but what with the Indian scare there were no buyers.

"Where mought ye be located, Mister?" Satterly inquired of Caleb, obviously curious how a Quaker managed to hang on in the teeth of the savages.

"Floyd's Fork within a stone's throw of Brashear's Station. Four hundred acres of good land." There was a certain calculation in Caleb's reply. "I've naught to fear from hostiles with the fort so close. They skulk around some, but they daren't make an open attack."

"Ye're a lucky man," Satterly muttered.

"Lucky? Thee can say so, Friend Satterly. I wouldn't call it that."

Dobbs snorted. He made no effort to hide the distaste in his voice.

"You're right it ain't luck! He was shrewd enough to buy land near the fort where somebody else must do his fighting for him. Depend on it, Satterly, these Quakers are a foxy lot. I never knew anybody to get the best of one yet."

CALEB was nettled. The surveyor had stung him on his sorest point. It did no good to tell himself that there need be no killing in the first place. For that matter, would he be so sure of his convictions were it not for the riflemen at Brashear's Station? It was this doubt of himself, more even than the condemnation of his neighbors, that gave him no peace.

"Thee is mistaken," he said bitterly. "I neither ask help nor want it of the militia."

Dobbs laughed in derision. "That's easy to say!"

Satterly nodded agreement. "Ye're beholden to 'em just the same, Mister. Iffen I'd been able to git land in close to a station, I wouldn't be in the fix I am."

"What does thee intend to do?"

"I'm making tracks fer Virginny, me an' my old lady an' the kids, though God knows what we'll do once 't we get there 'thout money."

"But thy land. Surely thee can sell it."

Satterly gave a short, bitter laugh.

"Aye. Twenty pounds. That's the best offer. Eleven hundred acres o' fine wild cherry, walnut and cane bottoms. Eighty cleared. A good tight cabin. Dobbs, hyar, says he'll give me twenty pounds fer it. Nobody else will make an offer."

"That's twenty pounds Virginia," Dobbs said. "Money's scarce. Nobody's fool enough to go out there to live, Satterly. I'm buying it for speculation."

"Has thee sold it yet?" Caleb asked.

Satterly shook his head. "I can't make up my mind—"

"I ain't rushing you," the surveyor told him shortly.

"Is thee certain thee is not acting overhasty, Friend Satterly?" Caleb asked.

"Harkee!" Satterly said with suppressed violence. "A dozen times I've found Injun sign in the woods about my place. Me an' my old lady's been living in the cabin with the dogs shet up with us an' a loaded rifle to hand. It got so's I couldn't eat nor sleep."

Dobbs grinned at Caleb. "Why don't you take it off his hands? 'Twould be an act of Christian charity, no less. And profitable too. Besides, you have no need of riflemen to protect you from the hostiles like the rest of us poor devils."

Caleb regarded the surveyor with a hint of amusement in his blue eyes.

"Aye, that's what I've been thinking. Friend Satterly, would thee consider exchanging thy land for mine?"

Satterly's jaw dropped. "Ye're funnin'!"

"Nay. I have but four hundred acres, 'tis true. But 'tis fair land, and thee and thy family could live in the station where thee would be safe from Indians."

Dobbs too, was staring at Caleb. He seemed to come to himself as he realized Caleb was in earnest and cursed all Quakers bitterly.

"Look here, Satterly," he snapped. "Maybe I've been a mite sharp. I'll raise my offer to thirty pounds."

But Satterly shook his head. "The money's no good to me, Dobbs. 'Twould scarce git us back to Virginny." He turned back to Caleb. "Mister, I can't figger why you want to trade."

"Thee is a man of small faith, Friend Satterly. The Indians will not be here always; thy land will. I heard thee was intending to abandon thy location and made inquiries. Thee is reputed to have the best plantation anywhere around." Caleb also had ridden out before his horses had been stolen and had looked it over, but saw no point in mentioning this. "Moreover," he added dryly, "what I won't do myself, I will not suffer others to do for me. I don't hold with bloodshed, nor do I care to benefit from it! Is it a trade?"

Satterly shook his head in amazement. "A trade? In course it's a trade!" Then he added wryly, "Ye're gittin' as fair a parcel o' land as ary in Kaintuck—iffen ye keep yer ha'r on. Ye won't back down?"

"Thee has my word," Caleb said in a tone that admitted no doubt.

Satterly had the bemused air of a man unable to believe in his own good fortune.

"I must tell my old lady; she's been powerful upset," he said and started off.

DOBBS watched him depart, a curiously mixed expression of baffled anger and resentment on his gaunt face.

"That's one fish thee failed to land, Friend Dobbs," Caleb remarked with satisfaction.

The surveyor turned on him as if he'd been slapped.

"I'll teach you to stay clear o' my affairs, you pious fraud! Hold yourself better than the rest of us, d'you?" Dobbs roared. "Too good to fight!" He was working himself into a passion. Suddenly he lashed out bitterly with his fist.

The blow caught Caleb high on the cheekbone and the jar of it drove sparks before his eyes. He was conscious only of shock and a blinding impulse to strike back.

He shook his head as if to clear it. His hat had fallen off, exposing his brown hair combed down straight in front without the frivolity of a part. He heard the cry of "Fight!" raised. The settlers were coming on the run; men, women and children. A fight to them was a glorious thing, he knew. There was no more welcome diversion in the grueling drudgery of their lives.

Dobbs' lean face was flushed triumphantly.

"You'll fight now, by godly, or be known for the coward you are!"

Caleb stooped, picked up his hat, set it squarely on his head. The galling effort at control made his face wooden.

"Thee is the coward," he said in contempt, "to hit a man who thee knows will not strike back. I would not dirty my hands on thee."

The words seemed to goad Dobbs out of his senses. He lunged at Caleb, tripped

him up, kicked him viciously in the ribs.

"Fight! Fight, damn ye," he yelled crazily, "or I'll tramp you to death!"

Caleb got to his feet, a strained, tight look about his mouth. His hands shook as he dusted himself off.

"Hit him, Caleb!" a girl's, clear, excited voice rang like a bell from the edge of the crowd.

'Twas Jane, he realized, with a sharp regret that she should see this.

"Get out!" Dobbs was raging. "Get out of the country. I'm warning you. The next time I lay eyes on you, I'll put a ball through your brain. We want no yellow-bellied Quakers around these parts!"

"I go where I please," Caleb said evenly, "when I please. I said thee was a coward and I repeat it. Thee can't frighten me away as I do not doubt thee has done with others—"

Dobbs bellowed like a goaded bull, charged with both arms swinging. In spite of himself, Caleb was driven back. His heel caught on a rock, and he went over backwards. The surveyor was on him instantly, kicking brutally at his head. The man seemed beside himself with rage.

Jane Conklin wriggled through the circle of spectators. Her face framed in a poke bonnet was white and frightened. She was barefooted, clad in a plain linsey gown. Somewhere she had snatched up a length of fire-wood.

She set her mouth, clubbed the surveyor across the back of his skull with a two handed swing and no warning.

Dobbs didn't make a sound, but pitched forward, sprawling face down in the dirt. He didn't move either.

"Get up!" the girl commanded Caleb, her gray eyes hot with embarrassment.

But he was already rising. His mouth was bleeding, and he spat out the salt blood. His eyes were queer and without any depth in them.

"Thee shouldn't have done that." He made the statement in a flat voice that carefully revealed nothing.

"He would've killed ye!" Jane cried indignantly. "Would ye have me stand by and see ye murdered? If you won't take up for yourself, Caleb, then somebody must do it for ye!"

The men laughed. No one paid any attention to Dobbs, who was none too well liked because of his land-jobbing.

Caleb shook his head. "Nay. I'll have no one fighting for my sake."

Jane's face tightened. She poked a damp strand of yellow hair back under her bonnet with an impatient gesture.

"Why will ye persist in this foolishness? Answer me that, Caleb. Why? Why?"

"Foolishness?"

"Aye, foolishness! Such beliefs may work among the law-abiding tide-water folk, but out here a man must fight for what's his." She drew a breath, staring at him helplessly. "You ain't convinced, are you? 'Tis well you took up land so close to Brashear's where the milishy can watch over ye."

Caleb could feel the heat in his face. He daren't open his mouth for fear of what might come out. He was as nigh hating the girl at that moment as he supposed he ever could come.

Dobbs groaned and sat up, rubbing the back of his head, which brought forth an unfeeling ripple of laughter from the settlers.

The surveyor scrambled groggily to his feet and fumbled for the butcher knife at his belt, cursing Caleb the while. Two of the men shouldered him roughly aside.

"Leave him be!" Dobbs was told "He won't skeer, an' he won't fight, an' we ain't going to see you kill him in cold blood, neither."

Dobbs regarded the grinning faces around him, decided that they meant what they said, and pushed his way angrily through the press, heading for Sander's Keep and the barrel of liquor on tap there.

"You be on the lookout fer that feller," a lantern-jawed hunter warned Caleb. "We might not be handy to stop him the next time."

Jane said helplessly, "Caleb, Caleb, can't ye see that the Injuns would've taken your scalp long ago had it not been that there were men to drive 'em off?"

Caleb's jaws were clamped together so tight it hurt to open them.

"That may well be, but it can be said no longer. I have traded my land for Friend Satterly's plantation on the lower Salt."

There was a dumbfounded silence.

"You haven't!" Jane cried in a stricken voice.

Bitterness suddenly edged his words. "What is the difference, whether I pull the trigger with my own hand, or allow others to do murder for me? Killing's a senseless business that only further antagonizes the savages—"

"If you mean to go out there to live," she flung out passionately, "you'll go by yourself! I'll not expose myself to the mercy of those varmints with a man who won't lift a hand to protect me!"

Caleb regarded her with a blue-eyed, unwinking stare. "I did not intend to let thee come, Jane," he said finally. "'Twould be wrong to expose thee to such danger on my account. Thee is free."

The girl caught her breath. Then her chin lifted. Without another glance at Caleb, she stalked off blindly.

He didn't say anything, and he didn't move; though he was finding it took nigh as much discipline to keep from rushing after her as it had to keep from striking Dobbs.

TWO weeks had made a vast difference in the woods. The new green leaves were unfurled. Under foot the black leaf-mold gave off a humid fertile smell. Caleb breathed it all in. He was tramping along the freshet-muddied Salt, a doe slung across his shoulders, the dogs ranging ahead. His face wore a film of sweat and an expression not unlike a new father.

Eleven hundred acres of fine land, settlers swarming in from beyond the mountains; the price of land going up. 'Twas beyond his understanding how Satterly had brought himself to part with it.

He heard Old Blues give an odd, snuffling bark, and he halted frowning. Old Blues was a bear dog—a half savage brute, nigh as big as a calf, uncommonly intelligent and contemptuous of smaller game.

But that wasn't Old Blues' bear-talk.

The woods along the river bottoms were too dense for Caleb to see the dogs. He broke his way up the hillside guided by their barking. Halfway up he reached a small bench where a spring flowed from the rocks.

He saw then, with a sudden coldness in the pit of his stomach. They were snuffling around the dead ashes of a fire. A small fire such as Indians made!

Caleb let the carcass of the deer slide to the ground. The pleasure he'd been taking in his land went out of him like water out of a burst cask.

The dogs were behaving queerly. They hated Indians worse than a whipping; and generally he could tell by their manner if they had scented hostiles. But Old Blues was giving the ground only an indifferent going over. Then he sat down, scratched at a flea.

Caleb's hopes revived somewhat. He cast about the bench, finding moccasin tracks in the damp earth by the spring, a bit of sinew, the well-gnawed bones of a turkey. Then his eyes lit on a discarded pot that had held vermilion; and his last hope vanished.

It had been Indians right enough. Six or seven from the sign!

He put his hand in the ashes, and the blood slowly left his cheeks.

The ashes were still warm!

He squatted there, and his eyes circled the hillside, returned to the dogs. They were sitting on their haunches, tongues lolling. The forest was silent except for the reassuring, drowsy chirruping of birds.

He knew now how Satterly must have felt. He could understand the blind, ferocious hatred of his fellow settlers for the Indians. Every instinct in him was suddenly at war with what he sincerely believed was the right.

He could not stand by supinely and let his work be destroyed, himself murdered possibly. 'Twas more than human flesh could bear!

More than ever he felt the need of Friends' moral support, of their stubborn undeviating courage. Jacob Beeson, who had let himself be flogged to death rather than join the militia or hire a substitute. Phineas Mendenhall, who had died from the lung fever in prison where he'd been sent because of his refusal to take an oath or remove his hat in court.

But they hadn't been alone.

Caleb didn't know whether he had the strength by himself to abide by his principles or not.

He reached his cabin without discovering further sign of the varmints. Perhaps

they'd gone on, aiming to swim the Ohio where the Salt joined it. 'Twas a favorite crossing of theirs.

He hung the deer to the limb of a sugar maple, skinned and dressed it and gave the entrails to the dogs. When he had salted the meat down, he washed up with water from the long trough by the door, went inside.

Satterly had built well. 'Twas a one-story cabin with a half-loft and a puncheon floor. It had a stone fireplace, heavy riven oak shutters, a clapboard roof. All it lacked was a woman.

With a wry expression, he hung his rifle and powder horn from pegs driven into the logs. Tomorrow without fail he must go to the Licks for powder. He had put it off till he had less than enough for a dozen rounds. And Jane. What would he say to the girl should he meet her? The very thought of her was a torment.

He was kindling a fire on the hearth, when he heard the dogs break into an excited, raucous clamor.

He hastened outside. The dogs were bristling, facing the trace to the Licks, making such an uproar he could scarce hear himself think. "Quiet!"

They stopped their racket instantly. In the silence the warm spring breeze brought him the drum of hoofs. The late afternoon sun made the stumps in the clearing throw long black shadows across the new turned earth. The pounding of hoofs swelled louder. Then the horse burst like a deer from the forest, came on toward the cabin at a dead run.

The rider was a woman, he saw with amazement. And almost instantly he recognized Jane Conklin!

THE girl was mounted astride, her long bare legs like peeled willow against the bay's sweat-darkened flanks. She hauled up the beast in front of him, tumbled off unmindful of her dishevelment, too breathless to speak.

Caleb was hard put to it to maintain his disapproving expression.

"I misdoubt thee would be so free in exposing thy legs," he said dryly, "were they less sightly."

Her gray eyes widened, then a glint of amusement grew in them.

"Why, Caleb, that's the first compliment ye ever paid me!" But her face instantly sobered and she hurried on, her words tripping over themselves in her urgency.

"I rode out to warn ye. Savages burnt John Lowry's cabin this morning. Killed old Mrs. Lowry and the two boys. The milishy found Rebecca wandering in the woods where she'd escaped from the varmints on the march. They're believed to be headin' this way!"

Caleb's mouth was suddenly dry.

"How many?"

"A score at least, the milishy says. They took up the trail right off, but the varmints had scattered. They'll likely not come together again this side of the river. Don't just stand there! There's scarce time even now to get to the station afore dark!"

His blue eyes clouded and his face hardened. "Thee misjudges me, Jane. Those weren't idle words, I spoke at the Lick."

"Be ye mad, Caleb Fry? And after I've rode all this way through the woods, seeing Injuns behind every tree—"

His expression silenced her.

"Jane," he said in a harsh voice, "what kind of man does thee take me for?"

"A hard man!" she said bitterly. "A cruel, hard man!"

He shook his head, surprised that she should think such a thing.

"Nay. 'Tis not that."

But he saw that she wasn't listening. She had turned apprehensively to the forest which seemed to wall the horizon, casting its lengthening shadow before it. She faced him suddenly, her lips set.

"If ye won't save yerself for your own sake, can't ye do it for mine?"

"Thy sake?"

"Aye! Do I have to tell ye that I love ye so much I don't care to go on living without ye? I'll go anywhere, do anything you want. Only come back with me till the hostiles leave these parts!"

Caleb was too shocked to reply at once. Then his hands closed hungrily on her shoulders.

"Thee is going back. Alone! Now, while there is yet time and I still have my self-respect!"

He caught her up bodily, strode to the horse, tossed her to its back.

Jane promptly slid to the ground on the off side.

Caleb said, "Jane, get thyself back on that horse, else I shall tie thee on. I affirm it!"

For answer the girl slipped the bridle quick as a thought, lashed the startled beast across the rump with the reins. It lunged, bolted wildly for the forest.

"If you stay," Jane told him, "so do I!" with Caleb staring after it helplessly.

When he turned back to the girl, there was respect in the depths of his eyes, but all he said was, "'Twas unnecessary to throw away a good horse."

With nightfall Caleb called the dogs inside, closed and barred the door. The mournful cries of the whippoorwills, the shrilling of the tree frogs grew faint as if they had moved further off into the forest. Jane lit the bear grease lamp with a splinter from the fire, her eyes bright and big as pine tree shillings.

"Caleb, would ye really let the varmints tomahawk me without so much as lifting your hand?"

He said, "Let us hope the occasion doesn't arise," and sat down at the puncheon table, appraising her soberly. There was no denying but that she was a fetching piece as she knelt on the hearth, her face flushed from turning the spit.

"What will thy folks think about thee staying the night here?"

"It won't matter since we are to wed," she said candidly. "Maw's promised me a cow and the feather bed. If ye like I'll marry ye here an' now—Quaker fashion."

Caleb reddened. "Because we marry ourselves don't mean there's naught to it," he protested. "They must declare their intentions to the Monthly Meeting, then a committee is appointed to investigate—"

He realized that she was laughing at him and broke off with a faint grin. "Nay, we'll be married by the justice when the country's more settled and there's less danger from hostiles."

She gave him an amused glance and began to set the food on the table in wooden dishes, the roast loin of the deer, hot ash cake and wild honey. 'Twas too early for garden truck, but she'd picked a mess of wild greens and flavored them with a chunk of salt pork. The smells made Old Blues thump his tail on the floor.

Caleb said silent grace and in the hush they could hear the deep "carrrumping" of the bullfrogs down at the river. An owl hoo-hoo-hooed close by.

Caleb's face stiffened, graying beneath his leathery tan. His eyes sought Jane's, and they both looked at the dogs who merely looked bored.

The girl giggled nervously.

"'Tis only an owl."

He nodded and they ate in silence using knives and their fingers, conscious all the while of the noises outside. The faint jangle of the cowbell as the oxen stirred. The howling of a wolf. Once Old Blues started up with a savage growl, his ruff abristle, and there was the sound of something being knocked over outside.

Caleb sprang to the door, put his eye to the loop-hole.

At first he could see nothing but blackness. Then he made out an indistinct shape. The dogs charged against the door again and again, giving tongue to a fierce bell-like note.

He silenced them, turned to Jane. "A bear," he said. "He's gone."

She was standing with her palms flat on the table, her face shockingly white. She sank back to the bench without speaking.

"'Tis a long walk to the Licks," he said, "and we must leave at daybreak. Thee had best get some rest."

CALEB didn't intend to sleep. But night was an endless thing. The fire died out. Old Blues whined in his sleep and his legs jerked spasmodically. Overhead in the half-loft, Caleb could hear the shuck tick rustle as Jane turned restlessly.

He awoke with a start in the pitch blackness and the tumult of the barking dogs, and fear closed his throat. He started to his feet. "Quiet!" he called softly.

The dogs subsided into rumbling watchfulness.

"What is it?" Jane called, her voice a frightened gasp.

"I don't know. Stay where thee is."

He struck a spark, blew it into a tiny flame, lit the bull's-eye lantern, shielding the feeble glow with an old linen shirt so

it wouldn't show through the loopholes. There was a crisp late smell to the night air. Dawn couldn't be far off.

It struck him suddenly that Old Blues was not acting as if he scented Indians. There was none of that stark savagery in his warning rumble that the hostiles generally aroused in him.

Caleb moved quietly to the door, listened open-mouthed. For a long while there was naught but silence, then he thought he detected soft footfalls. Something scraped against the bottom log.

There was a coldness in him that no outside warmth could touch. He eased the bar out of its socket, pulled the door inward, peered through the crack. But it was so dark he might as well have had his eyes closed.

He heard a rustle behind him, and glancing back over his shoulder, saw the dim shape of Jane climbing down the ladder from the half-loft. He motioned for her to keep quiet.

Outside there was a click as of steel striking flint. A spark jumped, caught in a fluff of tinder, grew, blossomed as it was blown upon. By its reflected glow, he made out the lean, intent face of Isaac Dobbs!

The surveyor was crouched over a pile of brush which he had stacked against the side of the cabin. Unaware that he had been discovered, he thrust the flaming tinder into the pile. The brush began to catch, licking hungrily against the logs.

Heedless of his person, Caleb flung the door wide, snatched up the wooden pail beside the water trough. With a single motion he scooped it full of water and emptied it on the fire.

There was a hiss as the water struck. The flames were extinguished and darkness swirled back in their wake.

"So thee is the Indian who has been leaving his sign all over the woods!" Caleb's voice shook with the violence of his passion.

The only answer was the faint snick of a rifle lock.

Jane cried, "Caleb! Who is it, Caleb?"

"Dobbs! I caught him trying to set fire to the cabin!"

He felt the girl brush against him in the doorway. Then she had whipped the covering from the bull's-eye lantern.

The light sprang out, discovered the surveyor less than three good steps off. He was creeping up on Caleb like a fox, his rifle held out in front of him, low, and the butt clamped against his side. The sudden glare seemed to confuse him, for he halted.

Before he could move, Caleb lunged, seized the rifle barrel, wrenched it from his hands and tossed it into the water trough. He made a grab for the surveyor's powder horn like the swipe of a bear's paw. The strap parted and it too joined the rifle beneath the water with a faint splash.

Dobbs gave a dismayed grunt; his eyes jerked from the trough to Caleb, who had stepped back inside the doorway and reached down his own rifle and powder horn.

The blood drained from the surveyor's face. His mouth opened; he tried to speak.

Caleb deliberately discharged his weapon in the air, emptied his powder horn on the ground. The cold contempt in his voice stung the blood back into Dobbs' face.

"Thee is a coward and worse than a coward! Manufacturing sign to keep the Indian scare alive! Frightening honest folk into selling their land cheap! Thee might have deceived me, but thee couldn't fool the dogs' noses!"

The surveyor's mouth was ugly in the lantern light, and his neck swelled, and he said nothing.

"Heed my advice, Dobbs. Clear out. When it becomes known what thee has done, thee'll be favored to get off with tar and feathering. And known it shall be. Thee has my word on it!"

"Take keer!" Jane cried piercingly, "He means to kill ye!"

Caleb threw himself aside, just as Dobbs snatched the tomahawk from his belt, flung it end over end. It went glimmering past his ear, sailed through the open door, struck the rear wall with a clatter. Then the surveyor ran at him, the butcher knife in his hand sword-like, thin edge up.

Without warning, Old Blues struck himself out of the shadows at Dobbs. His shoulder struck the man in the chest and his powerful jaws came together on Dobbs' forearm and they went down in a heap.

Instantly the other two dogs waded in.

Caleb stared in horror at the snarling thrashing tangle on the ground. Dobbs screamed like a girl. It was a terrible sound. It brought Caleb to his senses. He strode into the melee, grabbed Old Blues by the scruff of the neck, plucked him loose. He cuffed the other dogs aside, set Dobbs on his feet, lifting him by the front of the doeskin hunting shirt.

The man was bleeding from a dozen places, his arm was badly mauled, and the fear of death was in his eyes. Caleb helped him inside, told Jane to fetch water.

"Let him fetch his own water," she said thinly. "He would've killed ye and laid the blame to the savages."

"So?" said Caleb, and straightened, turning his glance on her.

Her mouth set, but she snatched up an empty piggin and with an angry switch of her skirts, went out to the trough, saying over her shoulder, "Deliver us from any more Quakers. One's enough to try the patience of the whole county!"

She set the water down violently when she returned so that it slopped over the rim. Her gray eyes were scornful as they rested on Dobbs.

"This cre'ture might've been makin' Injun *sign*, but he didn't burn the Lowry cabin; and there's been racket enough here to draw any hostile for ten miles around!"

Caleb's face stiffened. He crossed to the open door. The sky was paling in the east, but the darkness lay thick everywhere else. Calling the dogs inside again, he slid the bar in place.

"'Twill be day soon, and we can start for the Licks."

Dobbs spoke up sourly, "'Tis their favorite time to attack. When there's light enough to see but not to shoot by."

"Then we'll give 'em a warm welcome," Jane said. "I'll make a fire an' run off some balls. Nor would a bite to eat be amiss."

"There's no powder," said Caleb shortly.

"No powder! But surely ye didn't throw it all away?"

Dobbs said, "You crazy Quaker, you'll get us all killed!" in a voice drained of hope.

Caleb said nothing.

IT WAS Old Blues who sensed them first. With a growl, he rose stiff-legged, ruff standing up, broke into furious barking. The other dogs joined in. There was no mistaking their manner this time. Caleb had to order them repeatedly to be quiet before they paid the least attention to him.

No word was spoken. Jane stared at Caleb helplessly as if expecting him to perform some miracle.

He moved to the loophole in the door, peered out. The clearing lay gray and bleak around the cabin with the stumps just visible. The forest was still a black wall against the sky in which nothing could be distinguished.

"They must be laying back in the woods."

"Aye." Dobbs' voice held an edge of panic. "Waiting for you to come out and go about your morning chores!"

Caleb shook his head.

"They must've heard the dogs. They'll know we've been alarmed." He took the ax, pried up one of the puncheons, exposing the dark shallow space between earth and floor.

"Get thee in there, Jane. Thee too, Dobbs. They have no reason to believe I am not alone here."

The girl bit her lip, staring at Caleb with frightened gray eyes.

"But what will you do?"

"Hurry!" he bade her in a rough voice. "Would thee get us all murdered?"

She swallowed, and squeezed obediently through the gap in the floor, wormed her way out of sight. Dobbs' face was like clay. He lost no time crawling in beside her. Caleb let the puncheon back into place.

There was a fine sheen of sweat on his face, and the palms of his hands were slick with sweat. He tied up the dogs. "Don't make a sound unless I tell thee they are gone," he told them through the cracks. Then he went to the door, unbarred it, flung it wide.

The clearing was lighter. The morning clatter of the birds seemed to deafen him. There must be ten thousand birds, he thought, all singing at once.

He stepped out on the stoop, ladled water from the trough into the bucket and

washed his face. But from the tops of his eyes watched the forest. 'Twas beyond practical rifle shot. If they intended to murder him, they must first expose themselves. He finished washing up, gathered an armload of firewood, went back inside. When he came out again, they were there.

There were three of them, he saw. They were less than forty yards from the cabin as if they had sprung up out of the earth. Tall, naked men, their faces hideous with vermilion.

Somehow Caleb managed to control the start they gave him, but the bitter taste of fear welled up in his throat. He made no move, for he felt that if he did his legs must give way with him.

They came on through the damp gray daybreak, intently, warily, like hunters closing in on their game. Their heads were shaven except for a bristly ruff. They carried fine Pennsylvania rifles. A hank of gray hair dangled from the breechclout of one. Caleb stared at it with dawning comprehension. It could be naught but old Mrs. Lowry's scalp!

He sucked in his breath and he could feel the anger surge through him.

"Get thee gone!"

He strode toward them, confronting them like an Old Testament prophet, his voice sounding as if he were casting out devils, his blue eyes blazing with his sense of outrage at the atrocity. "Get thee gone before I so far forget myself as to kill thee with my bare hands!"

And he looked at that moment as if he could do it.

The Indians stopped. It was impossible to tell what went on behind the painted masks of their faces. One of them reached for his tomahawk. But the man with the gray-haired scalp at his belt said something in his outlandish tongue. The savage let go of his weapon reluctantly. There was something in all their eyes—distaste, foreboding, a touch of awe. Caleb was too far gone in passion to care what it was.

"I had thought to offer thee food and hospitality," he said in his fury. "And thee comes here— to my house—with the blood of an old woman and children on thy hands. Thee is worse than the wild beasts, who at least kill only to eat. Thee will get nothing from me!"

They made a wide circle about him, approached the cabin, stuck their heads in the door—seeing that it was empty, seeing the snarling dogs tied to the wall. They talked amongst themselves briefly in low tones. With a startled grunt, one of them pointed out the guns in the water trough.

Caleb stared after them, dazed by their behavior. The fine edge of his anger had burned itself out, leaving him cold and drained of strength. He had naught to sustain him save his determination.

The Indians had found his salted meat and were helping themselves, stuffing their wallets. They made a search of his cabin, came forth carrying a dutch blanket, his second best shirt, a butcher knife and the spring catch of beaver pelts which he had planned to deposit at Sander's Keep.

They glanced at him, their eyes bright, inscrutable. One of them laughed and touched his head.

The one with the scalplock said "Go!" and pointed toward the east, as if warning him to return across the mountains. Then they were gone as silently as they had come, disappearing around the cabin. He heard the oxen snort in terror at the strange scent and the bells jangle and the snarling of the dogs.

He felt that his legs couldn't hold him up another moment and sank down on a stump. It was bright daylight, the sun rising above the forest. The Indians were gone. He was still alive, and he couldn't understand quite why.

HE DIDN'T know how long he sat there just breathing in the good smell of the fourth-month morning. It was the crash of underbrush which finally brought him out of the reverie. He thought the Indians were back and leaped to his feet.

Then he caught the sound of hoofs and voices, and a party of horsemen trotted into the clearing. 'Twas the militia he saw with relief. Almost instantly he was struck by an idea that wouldn't have occurred to him before his experience with the Indians, and he hastened to meet them, motioning them to be silent.

The men were dismounting. John Elkins, their captain, called, "How d'ye, Caleb. We're out after a party o' hostiles.

Thought we'd stop by to see if ye'd been parted from that scalp o' yers yet."

Caleb sensed the genuine concern behind Elkins' banter, but could summon no indignation that they should still be trying to look after him. His face was expressionless, his voice matter-of-fact.

"Thee is a little late, Friend Elkins. The savages have come and gone; but they left one of their number behind."

Elkins had been elected captain because of his knowledge of Indians and their ways, having been captured twice by the varmints. He was a burly profane man with a mane of black hair.

"If I didn't know ye better, Caleb, I'd say ye was a prime liar."

Caleb said, "Make no noise and I'll show him to thee."

He turned on his heel, leading them to the cabin, where he seized the ax, pried up the puncheon. Dobbs sat up with a jerk; and from the look on his face, he thought his time had come.

"He's from a different tribe," Caleb said dryly. "For as thee can see, he was not anxious to meet the savages who were just here. But he's the varmint who's been leaving his sign all over the woods none the less."

The dumbfounded silence held for the space of a heartbeat. Then the men broke into shouts of laughter. Dobbs made a sorry spectacle indeed as he was pulled out roughly. 'Twas a thing he'd never be able to live down.

Caleb helped Jane from beneath the floor. The girl's cheeks were flushed, her eyes wide with wonder.

"He ordered 'em off," she told Elkins when she could make herself heard. "He ordered 'em off; and they went!"

Elkins listened carefully to the whole story while the others maintained a curious silence. When it was finished, the captain scratched his head, and there was an amused twinkle in his black eyes.

"Son," he told Caleb, "they thought ye daft. They're leery o' daft folk. It's something to do with their heathen belief."

Jane giggled.

One of the men said, "They weren't far wrong!"

And they all laughed and crowded about Caleb asking questions. The fact that Indians had believed him crazy, he sensed, had made him somehow more human in their eyes. He wasn't sorry. These were good folks, only somewhat misguided.

He had been favored and he was grateful, though the beaver pelts were a loss. The reason why the Indians hadn't molested him was unimportant. The thing that counted, he thought suddenly, was the way a man met trouble when it came, whether he kept faith with himself.

Jane was shaking his arm.

"Ain't ye going to ask 'em to take a bite to eat?" she whispered.

Caleb remembered his manners and invited them in to share his victuals.

They reckoned they would. Elkins said, "We got one Injun, at least," jerking his head at Dobbs. "Couple o' families been talking o' moving out this way. I figger there'll be more oncet they l'arn about this varmint."

Caleb nodded soberly. "Thee could almost say the country roundabout was settling up."

"If ye stretched a point." Elkins was amused.

Jane gave Caleb a startled glance, but his expression didn't change.

"Friend Elkins, if thee could spare us a horse, we would accompany thee to the Licks. We need salt and powder, and a marriage license."

Elkins, who had carefully refrained from commenting on Jane's presence, began to grin.

"Knowing old man Conklin like I do," he said, "I reckon ye will."

Jane laughed and clasped Caleb tightly around the neck, to the vast amusement of everybody but Caleb.

"Jane," he said, "such a display in public is unseemly." But he didn't look too displeased. "Thee is sure," he added, "that thy mother promised thee the cow?"

# THE CAMP-FIRE

***Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet***

HERE'S what we wrote Robert Sawyer after reading his story, "The Last Payment," which appears in this issue: "Frankly, this story is very definitely 'off-the-trail' for *Adventure* — BUT it has such an intriguing sense of atmosphere, and is so effectively handled, that we'll just have to find a place for it in the magazine." It's the kind of yarn that's hard to classify, but naturally we hope that your reaction to it coincides with ours. Well, Mr. Sawyer wrote back that he was mighty pleased that we liked the piece anyway, whatever our reasons might be for doing so, and told us something about himself. We were pretty surprised to learn that, although he has had considerable writing experience, this is his first published short story. Here's what he says—

I am 33 years old, married, and have two children. I live in Greenwich Village, hope some day to find a larger, reasonably priced apartment or country hideaway, and do free-lance commercial motion picture and television writing with an occasional shot at radio.

I have a deep, sideline interest—commercial and otherwise—in photography. This is an outgrowth of the war. I enlisted as a U. S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS Combat Cameraman, was sent to the ETO, and saw action with the 35th and 5th Infantry Divisions and 4th, 6th, and 11th Armored outfits. I waded off an LST onto Omaha Beach in Normandy with a 35mm motion picture camera, and was still using it and a 4x5 press job when Third Army met the Russians in Linz, Austria. Out of that mileage, I remember three names. St. Lô, Bastogne, and Diekirch. I was NCO-in-Charge of a six man combat photo unit, spent eleven months in the line, caught two decorations and five battle stars, and never stopped wondering why I couldn't have just dropped in to see OWI in Washington the day I felt The Call.

For 3 months after V-J Day, I worked on special assignment for the War Crimes Commission in gathering photographic atrocity evidence which was later used in the War Trials.

Before the war, I spent most of my time in Hollywood. Without food. I did a short writing stint at M-G-M, a longer one for a famous producer, and sold a couple of screen originals to Poverty Row. Outside of a few script polishing jobs and some special dialogue work, I spent the rest of my time training and planing back and forth between N. Y. and Hollywood trying to look impressively busy.

I started writing professionally in high school. I had a by-line with two Long Island newspapers for almost two years but found, after leaving school, that journalism wasn't too compelling a task. I set out for Hollywood, taking the long way round and arriving a year later. In between was a mixture of U.S., Central American, South American and European scenery. All viewed from extremely low class accommodations. I walked, hitch-hiked, rode freights, chipped rust, and managed to fit at least fifty per cent of any place or thing I was ever curious about into my itinerary. I'm still working on the other fifty per cent.

This is my third attempt at short story writing and the first to be published. I've written two plays, and still hope to see one produced. I think writing is the hardest work imaginable but nothing to what the author suffers if he leaves it undone.

As for sidelights on the story inspiration for "The Last Payment," I just happened to be wandering around South Street taking pictures one day and was as fascinated as ever with the picturesque age of the locale. To my mind, that section of the waterfront always conjures up images of New York in an extremely colorful and adventurous era. It was a raw blustery day, I was poor in pocket, and there you are.

NEXT to mount the speaker's rostrum, in accordance with old *Camp-Fire* custom, is a member of the San Diego Police Department—Ed Dieckmann, Jr.—who contributes the concise fact story on deadly weapons of ancient times—"David Had A Slingshot." He certainly crowded

into a small space a lot of fascinating facts regarding the amazing power and accuracy of the old crossbow and catapult, and that ingenious device for multiple murder—the polybolos. Read it for yourself, if you haven't already, and you'll see what we mean . . . Okay, Officer Dieckmann, we'll move along quietly now, and let you have the floor.

Was born 29 years ago in San Diego, where I still live with my wife and stalwart son. Am on the Police Department here.

During the war I fought with the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific Theater. Have since decided that you have to be a little bit "teched" to be a paratrooper.

Main interests, outside of the economic, are weight-lifting and writing. Have appeared so far in *Blue Book, Argosy* and *Esquire*. This is my first in *Adventure*. Believe me, I've been plugging a long time! But still I beat my Dad. A writer of old-time adventure, he has been featured in many magazines, but not *Adventure*. His comment on hearing about "David Had A Slingshot" was: "Doggone, you beat me!"

A few after-the-fact comments on "David Had A Slingshot" leave me wondering if I'll ever write an article the way it should be. Still I'd like to take advantage of this *Camp-Fire* to clear up a couple of points.

When I say that Bud Pierson set that record in 1946, I do not take into account any later records. So far as I know, his mark still stands. But since '46 I wouldn't be surprised if someone, most likely Pierson himself, has broken that record. There have been some mighty powerful, elastic bows made in the last two or three years! The composite, plastic ones have been outstandingly successful. They are even more complicated in construction than was the Turkish. So far the Turks are still over 100 yards ahead on range!

Another point in this critique—someone might claim that Gatling really received the idea for his weapon from the cylinder handguns, the revolvers coming to the fore around the time he perfected his "machine gun." Now that sure would sound logical. However, there are two characteristics so identical in both the Gatling gun and the Polybolos that there's no room left for doubt. You see, both had a rear crank-lever that turned the cylinder; and both had a magazine box topside running the length of the barrel-trough.

While on ye subject of odd ballistas, they also had one made of laminated strips of copper. Highly efficient it was, too! But it cost too much. Actually such a ballista, one using a single bow instead of cord bundles, would be more of a giant crossbow than ballista. The name is hard to get away from! For in the middle ages crossbows were generally termed "manu-ballistas"—or hand ballistas.

IRA L. NICKERSON, who now writes authentic Western yarns (see "The Gorgeous Gunman"), confesses that his first cayuse was hitched to a Coney Island carrousel!

Western writing comes only naturally after having been virtually raised in the saddle of a bucking horse—on the Coney Island merry-go-round! Perhaps it's merely a plot by my subconscious mind to refute Rudyard Kipling's statement that, "Never the twain shall meet," for I was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey and grew up in eastern cities. Tales that America extended beyond Pittsburgh were regarded as outrageous rumors until I enlisted in the Army Air Force and underwent training in several western states. This experience, plus some three years of piloting assorted airplanes over the same terrain convinced me that the West not only existed, but was plenty big. And where there is land, there is history, together with colorful stories of the people who made it. A chance reference to a long-haired sheriff in Arizona set me on the trail of Commodore Perry Owens, as fascinating a character as I've run across this side of fiction. Besides flying, I have worked as a salesman, a package wrapper, a private detective. I also wrote for twenty-four weeks on a network comedy show. Satisfied that the West really does exist, I have gone whole-hog and moved, lock, stock and typewriter, to California. There, to the accompaniment of lowing cattle, falling oranges, and lisping movie starlets, I hope to unearth more stories as enjoyable to write as was, "The Gorgeous Gunman."

WILMON MENARD, a master of stirring adventure narrative if we ever knew one, is on hand again this month—remember his story "The Cave of Death" a couple of issues back? (That one really put our spine in the deep freeze!) And he sends along the following letter to accompany his account of an all-out hunt for a Malayan man-eater—"Killer Tiger of Kelan."

I hear from friends in the Malay federated and unfederated states quite frequently. There is much activity there now in rubber, which was interrupted by the war. Within the past eight months lots of new machinery has come into the rubber plantations and they are reclaiming forests which during the Jap occupation were claimed by the jungle-growths. Crowden writes that since I was there he and native hunters have killed two more tigers. Crowden taught me considerable about hunting in the jungles. He was for a time a white-hunter in Nairobi.

*(Continued on page 126)*

# ASK ADVENTURE

*Information You Can't Get Elsewhere*

## FROM bondage to vagabondage.

Query:—I would like some information, but before I go into details there are some points I believe I should clear up before they arise. Two friends of mine and myself have developed a dislike for the "stick in the same rut" type of life and have secured a 35-foot ketch in which to rid ourselves of at least a part of it. We are not romantics, simply independent. I have had eight years' sea experience and my friends six apiece. We are in turn an artist, radio man, and machinist. We would like to have what information you could give us as to jobs in the islands (including Australia), trading, general cruising, and what papers to secure for traveling and for stopping, if we see fit. This information will be of great service to us as we all have traveled quite a bit but only one of us in the Pacific islands.

—Hubert E. Eager, Jr.
Alameda, Calif.

Reply by William McCreadie:—I envy you your youth and proposed expedition. As an artist you will be welcome to the French folks in Tahiti. A radio man and machinist should be welcome in any British or U. S. Territories, but there are very few jobs to be had in any of the islands.

Still, owing to your avocations, I should feel rather hopeful for your success. You should find it easy to get work in Australia, where mechanics are in very short-supply. Would advise, if possible, you have auxiliary power in your ketch, as currents, at times, are very tricky in some places when entering ports. Incidentally, be sure to keep all food in air-tight tins. Cheerio.

## INDIAN-FIGHTING wasn't funny.

Query:—A young veteran of my acquaintance is trying to sell adventure stories. These stories, which are based on incidents taken from skirmishes fought by the Old Army, have all been turned down. His stories of the Navy seem to sell. In checking through one of his manuscripts these questions come to my mind:

1. Is it not a mistake, when the colonel's orderly is an infantryman to equip him with a revolver? Would he not wear a bayonet in a scabbard?

2. It is my belief that Upton's Tactics were superseded by another Infantry Manual and the command "Right into line wheel, MARCH, Guides, Posts," etc. was discontinued. Wheel being used in the Civil War and up until the new manual came out?

Back in the dim recesses of my mind is an impression that the flags at Fort David A. Russel were small—the wind every month of the year was so intense that it whipped large-size flags in pieces, and therefore even to further interest in a character it would be impossible to use the flag which "for many a month had flown from the halyard, to wrap the body of an officer who fell in the line of duty," since any of them would be too small.

3. This particular story is based on the fiasco of the Little Big Horn. In one instance the whole story pivots on the fact that Crook, Terry and Gibbon had no liaison officers, did not send out couriers. My own impressions gathered from shop talk in the family group lead me to believe that Cook sent out scout after scout as did Gibbon, but they could not get through.

Are there any books which you can recommend which would clear up this situation? Today's veteran knows nothing of cavalry tactics, and thinks Indian fighting was a joke. It is this I believe which bounces the manuscripts.

Somewhere in the misty past I remember a shelf of books which contained "St George-Cook's famous tactics," something on the non-commissioned officer by General Guy V. Henry 1st, and another by General A. V. Kautz. It would seem that these boys might get hold of something which would help them. The local libraries and old bookshops have been thoroughly canvassed in vain.

Also, is there any publication which would describe the 'workin's' of the Gatlin Gun and the Hotchkiss?

—E. W. Hill
Santa Monica, Calif.

Reply by Col. R. G. Emery:—If your young friend actually thinks that Indian fighting was funny I'm not surprised at his

lack of success. He hasn't even had a base point from which to work.

In many ways, Indian warfare was the grimmest of any in which ground fighters have ever engaged. In the first place, it was a no-limit proposition. Indians sometimes took prisoners, I understand, but rarely adult males and never those in uniform. In the second, the Western Indian, at least, was the all-time master of small-unit tactics. That is not just a large statement, founded on a personal opinion.

In the '30's, I observed the training of the German infantry which later put the word "blitz" into the world's vocabulary. Almost to the day, ten years later, I again observed that infantry from the other side of the gunsights. A few of our divisions were their peers; none was their master. And in 1936 one of the best-thumbed manuals for training which they had was one called "Indian Fighting," or "Some Infantry Lessons from the North American Indian Warriors."

If the young man is going to write about historical military operations of any kind, he should recognize the fact that combat principles never change. The means do, but not the methods. Paratroops execute vertical envelopments. But you could always go to the right or the left. Now a third direction has been added. Some day, someone may invent an earth-borer and there will be four. The principle will remain the same.

As to your specific questions: (1) The chances are that the colonel's orderly [That is an error, by the way. The man would be either (a) *The Headquarters Orderly,* (b) *The Messenger of the Guard* (c) *The Headquarters Messenger,* or (d) in modern times, *The Commanding Officer's Secretary,* a staff sergeant. Colonel's orderlies are purely fictional. If the man was paid $10 a month to come around in the evenings and polish leather etc., he would be a "striker" or in GI language, a "dog-robber." Never an *orderly,* however.] Well, the pistol. Yes, he would ordinarily wear a pistol or a revolver, depending on the period. The bayonet is a side-arm only in conjunction with the rifle. It has never been considered as a weapon by itself.

You are right about the wheelings, up to a certain point. It is true that the "Wheel" was dropped along with Upton's Revised Tactics but those were still in use in the 80's. I have a copy, in fact, printed in 1880, which was used for several years thereafter.

Also, the command was not "Right Wheel into Line." It was "On Right (or Left) into Line." The wheelings were (1) *In circle, right wheel,* on a fixed pivot, or (2) *March Wheel, March!* on a moving pivot.

(3) The flag point is all right, I think. The *storm* flag is always flown on windy or rainy days but that flag is 8'x4'2". Plenty large enough to wrap an ordinary corpse. It is the one you see draped on caskets.

(4) I am not an expert on the Little Big Horn. I have read a certain amount about it but so many men seem to have devoted long and industrious lives to an exclusive study of that action that I wouldn't dream of making a positive assertion. I think that Crook and Gibbon did try to keep in touch. I know that they did not have so-called liaison. That was strictly a World War I development.

The best books I know of are "I Fought With Custer," Hunt; "Story of the Little Big Horn," Graham. Also, there is an old-timer out in Mount Pulaski, Illinois. Harry C. Sisk—who is one of those men I mentioned who has made a life-long study of that fiasco. He could tell you—he's the only old Indian fighter left that I know of—and he'd love to, if you asked him.

On the general subject, I'd recommend any or all the works of Charles King, sometime Captain and, I think finally, General King. He wrote voluminously and the old-timers—Sisk, for one—swear by him.

About the guns, try the Ordnance Museum, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland.

## HOW to get that Springfield.

Query:—In your reply to Mr. Barton's letter (*Adventure,* May issue) you state that a member of the N.R.A. may purchase a Springfield .30 Cal. Model 1903 for fifteen dollars.

I am interested in both joining this organization and in purchasing this rifle. Will you do me the favor of providing me with the necessary instructions on how and where I am able to join this organization?

Also instructions on applying for the purchase of this rifle.

—Milton M. Rubenfeldt
Peekskill, N.Y.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—In order to secure a Model 1903 MI .30 caliber used Springfield rifle, one must join the National Rifle Association, for at least one year, at a cost of $4.00 per annum.

The sale of these rifles has been suspended for a time, but will be reopened at some later date, which will be announced through the *American Rifleman,* the organization's monthly magazine, which all members receive their membership.

When you have your application (I'm enclosing one, incidentally), secure the signature of either a local N.R.A. member, whom you can undoubtedly contact through the local sporting goods dealer, or Rifle Club member, if there is one in your city. Or, the endorsement of your local Sheriff, Mayor, Chief of Police, or State Trooper will generally be entirely satisfactory to Headquarters.

Upon receiving your membership card, watch the *Rifleman* for announcement of the sale of rifles being resumed. There are

*(Continued on page 124)*

# ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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**American Folklore and Legend:** *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PRENCH, c/o *Adventure.*

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**Track**—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

**Woodcraft**—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

**Wrestling**—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

## SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

**Anthropology:** *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

**Entomology:** *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

**Forestry, North American:** *The U.S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

**Forestry, Tropical:** *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

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**Wildcrafting and Trapping**—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

## MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

**United States Army**—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure*.

**United States Coast Guard**—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

**United States Marine Corps**—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure*.

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**State Police**—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

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★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure*.

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

**Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands**—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

**Africa, Part 1** ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o *Adventure*. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure*.

**Madagascar**—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

**Asia, Part 1** ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **2** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **3** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **4** ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

★**The British Isles**—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

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**A Brawling Novelette of the Chesapeake Oystermen**

**By RICHARD E. GLENDINNING**

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**The True Story of a Little Horse with a Great Heart**

**By NORMAN B. WILTSEY**

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**A Timely Tale of the Incorrigible Injun's Latest Adventure**

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*(Continued from page 120)*

also Model 1917 rifles, (called Enfield, which they are NOT, but the modified Mausers a lot of us packed and swore at thirty-one years since) at a cost of $7.50, also. When the resumption of sale is announced, write to the Headquarters, sending in your signed card, and asking to purchase the rifle. The Springfields sell at the sum of $15, at the Arsenal, with a charge of about $1.85 for packing. You pay the express, and take what they send you, but I have seen hundreds of these Army rifles, and have still to see an unsatisfactory one, or a poor piece of Ordnance from the N.R.A.

I personally consider the magazine worth a dollar a copy, myself. It's very reliable and its writers know what they are doing, every step of the way. Riflemen, not theorists.

## VENISON via the bow-and-arrow route.

Query:—Am interested in going deer hunting with a bow. Am told I am too old at 53 to start. Is that so?

Am 5 feet 8 inches in height, weight 160 lbs., and in good physical condition. If the answer to my first question is in the negative, I would like the following information.

What length and strength bow would best fit me? What is the best wood for hunting bows? Is a short bow preferable to a long one for hunting?

Would you advise a recurved bow? How about these new steel bows? Will they break in cold weather?

Where can I get a book giving clear, simple directions for a new student of archery?

—E. E. Roebke
Waupun, Wisc.

Reply by Earl B. Powell:—As you are just about my own height and weigh almost as much (mine 170) I think something my size would fit you.

For target work you should use from 40 to 45 lbs., though you can use 50. For hunting, from 50 to 75. Arrows to be 28 inches long.

I do not like steel bows, they jar unpleasantly and tire you, and are not as good as a good wooden one. Also, apt to break when cold.

My preference for bows for hunting is the Osage Orange wood as it is hard to damage. Yew is nicer and smoother to shoot and so it might be a bit more accurate on that account, but it is soft wood and too easy to scratch—and a scratch in the wrong place means a break.

Lemonwood is plenty good for both target and hunting. Every kind of game has been killed with lemonwood bows.

For good books write to *The American Bowman-Review,* Albany, Oregon.

A FEW notes on the Navy.

Query:—As a reader of *Adventure* I would like to ask for some information regarding the Naval Service.

1. Did the U.S. Navy at any time have a group of pilots who were enlisted men?

2. If a person serves 12 years in the navy, then is out of the Service for two years and re-enlists, does his previous service count toward retirement benefits?

3. Are there any justifiable grounds for an enlisted man striking an officer while on duty, or off duty for that matter?

4. Is an officer given any choice as to the type of work he prefers; i.e., engineering, intelligence, etc.?

5. What is the highest rank and rate of pay that an enlisted man can attain today?

6. Is the Coast Guard a department of the Navy?

—W. P. Reese
Portland, Colo.

Reply by Frank Herold:—

1. Did the Navy at any time have a group of pilots who were enlisted men? Yes, they were "Aviation Pilots."

2. If a person serves 12 years in the Navy and then is out of the service for 2 years and re-enlists, does his previous service count toward retirement benefits? Yes.

3. Are there any justifiable grounds for an enlisted man striking an officer while, on duty, or off duty for that matter? Normally, NO! However, there are extenuating circumstances to many things in life and the Navy is human too. Only due investigation could decide whether or not such an act was justifiable. As an example —an enlisted man hears an Admiral calling for help and finds a Lieutenant beating up the Admiral. If the enlisted man came to the rescue of the Admiral by striking the Lieutenant I'd say it was justified. However, this is so far from a normal situation that I doubt if it has ever happened or that it ever will.

4. Is an officer given any choice as to type of work he prefers? Yes. At the Academy he can select Line Officer (the jack-of-all-trades *and* master-of-some service officer), Engineering, Marines, Supply, etc. Also, an officer who came from the ranks can go to full Commander as a specialist, a radioman for example who would stay in communications, etc.

5. The highest rank and rate of pay an enlisted man can attain today (while still in enlisted status) is that of a chief petty officer whose base pay is $165.00 per month with a 5% increase for each 3 years up to 50% so that with 30 years' service he'd get $247.50.

6. The Coast Guard operates under the Treasury Department in time of peace and under the Navy Department in time of war or whenever the President so directs.

THE END

Norman Rockwell

Al Parker

Jon Whitcomb

and
Ben Stahl
Stevan Dohanos
Robert Fawcett
Peter Helck
Gilbert Bundy
Austin Briggs
Harold von Schmidt
John Atherton
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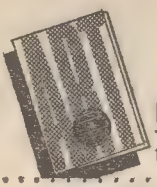

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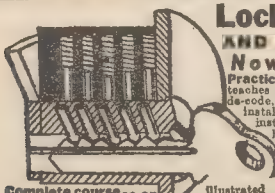

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*(Continued from page 118)*

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures are about to produce a story with a Malaya background, so my agent has alerted me that they want me to make final corrections in the script, so there will be no errors. Since 1932 the movie industry have called me in from time to time to make the final drafts on shooting-scripts, so that all technical mistakes of island backgrounds will be eliminated. My sphere includes practically all the South Seas. During filming here of "Mutiny on the Bounty" (the Hall-Nordhoff story) which has a background of Tahiti and Pitcairn Islands I served as technical director. Fortunately, I have spent many years in the South Seas (I went there when I was eighteen), and I have been back to most of the islands since the end of this last year, so I have recent contacts. Most of the footage on "Mutiny on the Bounty" was shot in Tahiti, and when they got back here with soundtracks I found they had recorded almost every dirty song known to the natives. They all had to be eliminated, after I had listened to them and censored them.

WE'VE saved space for some mighty interesting communications from readers, which have reached this desk in the past few weeks. Here's one from Lewis O. Barton of Clifton, Texas who writes—

The May 1949 issue of *Adventure* magazine contained an interesting account of the formation of the first American Legion in 1914, a group of patriotic Americans who were eager to get into the first World War on the side of the Allies if our government had let them go.

I wonder how many of the older *Camp-Fire* members remember a somewhat similar organization formed I believe in 1915 or-16 called "The Red Headed Regiment"? This regiment was to be composed of volunteers who had red hair—brunets, blonds and baldies would not be accepted no matter how well qualified they might be otherwise. When the news of this organization spread, volunteers offered their services from every state and every walk of life—ex-soldiers, sailors, cow-pokes, city clerks, college boys and lumberjacks, enough to form not one regiment but a division. As in the case of the Legion, our neutrality laws prevented these men from going to war as a body, but some did join the Canadian forces, and gave the idea for a poem that was published in *Adventure*. I would certainly like to read that poem again.

OF COURSE that letter sent us straight to the file of bound volumes of earlier years, and there, in the May 1916 issue of *Adventure,* we located the poem to which

Mr. Barton refers. It was written by Albert Jay Cook, who called it "The Rhyme of the Red-Heads." Wish we could reprint it here in its entirety—for it's quite a tribute to the courage and fighting qualities of the carrot-topped fraternity—but, unfortunately, it's a bit too lengthy to permit that. However, the closing verses went like this:

*The shrapnel was bursting and maiming,*
*the country with dead was sown;*
*And shell-fire was drowning the rifle and*
*clattering Maxim's tone.*
*The barbed-wire was stretched and en-*
*tangled, the bayonet glittered and*
*gleamed,*
*And far on the rim of the battle the mud of*
*the trenches steamed.*

*And I, as a war correspondent, a public at*
*home to serve,*
*Went up to the line of the fighting—it cer-*
*tainly tried my nerve.*
*I wandered through bomb-proofs and dug-*
*outs, I felt there was something queer;*
*And then, like a shot, came the answer: no*
*red-headed men were here.*

*I questioned a clean-shaven sergeant,*
*And asked for the flame-top bunch*
*Who'd rather, I thought, fight a battle,*
*Than eat at a king's own lunch.*
*He led me afar to a hillock,*
*And pointed me out in the glare*
*A sprinkling of mounds and of gravestones:*
*"THE RED-HEADED MEN ARE*
*THERE."*

PHILIP GODSELL'S article on "Headless Valley," which appeared in these pages last December, aroused considerable interest among *Adventure* readers. Here's a note from Walter I. Phillips of Los Angeles, who brings up an interesting subject which was briefly mentioned in that article.

Last December, *Adventure* carried an article by you on the "Headless Valley" in the Nehannie Mountains. In the course of your remarks you mentioned the Indians' stories of mammoths being found frozen in the ice and the story of one Indian who had sketched the likeness of a dinosaur which he claimed to have found in the ice. Yours is not the first casual reference to such finding that I have read, but it occurred to me that you might have further knowledge of such findings.

And Mr. Godsell's reply—

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fossilized remains. The remains of the primeval elephant are still abundant in the tundras of Siberia, and a considerable trade in mammoth ivory has been carried on between that region and England for many years. The same applies to Alaska where mammoth ivory from the frozen tundra and the glaciers is sold at every curio store along the Pacific coast that caters to the tourist trade. The mastodon probably came across the same route as the ancestors of our Indians—by the land communication that once existed where the Bering Straits are today—to meet gradual extinction from the encroachment of ice and other causes. Not infrequently reports have been brought in to the Yukon and Mackenzie River fur posts, by natives, of parts of these mammals becoming exposed by the falling away of ice-cliffs or ledges, leaving the flesh still fresh when thawed and even fit for dog-feed. In the entrails of a mammoth revealed in north-eastern Siberia some fifty years ago was found vegetable food unknown to the botany of today. Angus Graham in "The Golden Grindstone," Oxford University Press, Toronto, in 1935, mentions coming across the remains of a prehistoric mammoth in the Yukon in 1898, which fell apart when exposed to the air.

As recently as October 21, 1937, a complete prehistoric mammoth was thrown up on Wrangel Island by a convulsion of Nature, the frozen flesh still in perfect condition. In its mouth was some partly masticated moss and . . . a yellow poppy perfectly preserved! Striking evidence of the sudden cataclysm that had overwhelmed the land.

NOW here's something we don't often have a chance to do—follow up on the counsel given to our readers through the "Ask Adventure" service and observe how the A. A. expert's advice works out in actual practice. You may possibly recall that back in the July issue we ran a query by a man who wanted to know where he could buy a burro for a pet—and the answer was supplied by John Richard Young. Now Mr. Harold Kinread of Galata, Montana, the man who wanted the burro, reveals—in a letter to Mr. Young—how it all turned out.

We hope Mr. Kinread won't mind our printing his letter here—we thought it was so entertainingly written, in such a spirit of fun and good humor, that it should be shared with the rest of us. Anyway, here it is—

I thought I'd write and let you know how "Chiquita" is doing. She arrived from Nogales in fine shape.

A bunch of my horses were standing around when I got her out to the ranch,

and when I unloaded her and they saw her they just about fainted. They scattered in all directions and then ran around snorting with their tails in the air. Chiquita stood calmly by, watching them. I laughed till I cried.

They were very curious for several days and would stand around at a safe distance watching her in the corral. When she happened to bray they just "quit the flats." They are still suspicious of her. Some of them act as though they would like to be friendly and some as though they would like to eat her up. She does not seem to want anything to do with any of them. I am afraid to let her go where they can get to her. I let my shetland pony run with her but the pony is very jealous and when she sees me petting the burro she makes a dash for her but Chiquita is too quick and fast to be caught.

This burro is certainly a pet and as long as she is being petted and handled she is perfectly satisfied. She comes on the run when I call her and follows me around like a dog and will come right in the house if she gets a chance. She makes the dogs and cats hunt their holes.

She eats almost anything, being very fond of bread, cake, fig bars, orange peels (or whole oranges), "Molasso Cake," sheep pellets, and ground oats, also cold corn meal porridge. She also gets all the alfalfa and oat hay she wants, and grass when she is out in the yard. I do not know how this varied diet will agree with her but she certainly seems to feel good.

Every once in a while, she will run around the corrals and yard like an antelope, kicking her heels in the air and playing. I never had any idea a burro could run so fast.

She does not seem to mind the weather. When I first got her the nights were pretty chilly and the barn was open for her but she seemed to prefer staying outside in the hay corral. I do not know what will happen this winter. She has such big ears I am afraid they will freeze. What do you think? I do not know anything about a burro and would be very glad to have your opinion on whether there is any danger of her overeating. Is a burro liable to founder itself like a horse? She certainly is a lot smarter than a horse. She does not get scared and shy at strange things she sees, and does not get excited and cut herself up when she gets into a bunch of loose wire.

To sum everything up, I am very glad I got Chiquita and would hate to part with her, and I appreciate your letting me know where I could get a burro. I would also appreciate any further information you care to give me on her care and training. If you'd like to have me do so, I'll be glad to let you know how she stands the winter.

As Jack Young says, in commenting on the above, "There's proof that you have at least *one* satisfied customer." Hope it's a *few* more than that!—K.W.G.


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*(Continued from page 45)*

country infested with Navajo Indians. He battled with them constantly, defeating them in so many engagements that they came, at last, to fear him as a Ghost-man.

On one occasion, a party of a hundred braves laid siege to him in an old stage line station for three solid days. The Commodore had a log stockade for shelter and plenty of ammunition. Every time a Navajo showed his head, he shot him. Finally, the Indians gave up and rode away.

As a Texas trail driver, he had allowed his hair to grow long from sheer inattention. But in Navajo country he let it grow still longer for a highly useful reason.

When he sighted a war party of redskins, he would remove his hat and shake out his mass of hair. Then he would charge. The Navajos, sighting the "Ghost-man" riding down upon them with his yellow locks floating out behind, would flee for their lives.

Commodore Owens judged that his scalp adornment would have a similar effect upon outlaws, once he became known. He was quite right. One glimpse of his flowing tresses by an outlaw usually sent him scurrying for healthier country.

Thus it wasn't any wonder that when Owens retired from law enforcement, he cut off his hair as a way of telling the world that he had quit the warpath. Legend has it that an admirer gave him twenty-five dollars for the shorn locks.

The Commodore married Elizabeth Harrett on April 30, 1902. He settled down to become a rancher and mercantile dealer, leaving a small fortune to her when he died in 1919.

Unlike the majority of the West's early gunmen, he died of old age.

Arizona will never forget the day when he rode into Holbrook with his fancy clothes and long hair, to meet single-handed the challenge of an entire gang of killers.

As one observer said shortly after the epic Blevins battle, "The world will never see shooting like that again. It was gorgeous, that's what it was . . . plain gorgeous!"

THE END

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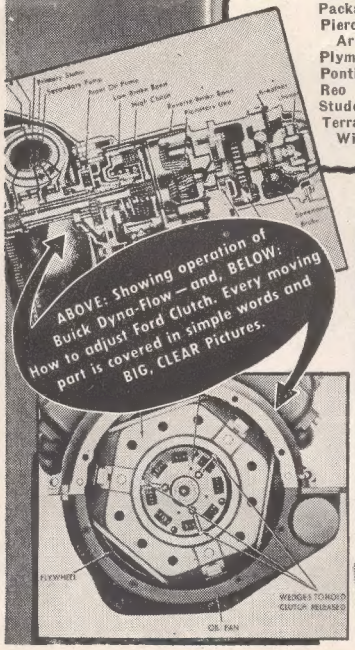
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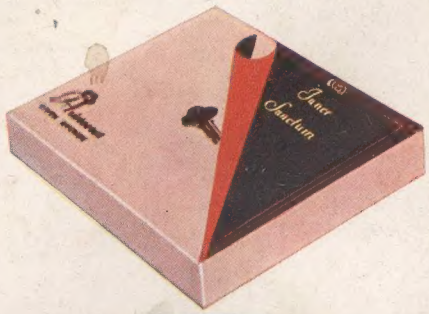


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